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CHAPTER II

VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

NYAKYUSA villages (*ifipangu*)[1] are formed by groups of boys or men, all roughly of the same age, together with the wives and young children of those who are married. Women belong to the villages of their husbands, young children to those of their fathers. Girls live at home until they are betrothed, after which they visit their future husbands periodically, and soon after puberty each joins her husband in his village. Boys, who marry later in life, leave home at about the age of ten or eleven and set up villages of their own.

a. *The genesis of the village*

Between the ages of about six and eleven boys sleep at their fathers' houses and herd their fathers' cattle. This is a full-time, if not a very arduous, occupation. The cattle are driven out about an hour or two after sunrise and return to be milked about 1 p.m.; after an hour they are again driven out and do not come back until sunset. The cattle of a group of neighbours, usually five to ten,[2] are herded together by their young sons; and so these boys spend all day together for several years of their lives. This group of boys is the germ of the future age-village; it is a community with a common activity in the herding of the cattle, with a leader and laws and customs of its own.[3]

When the boys reach the age of ten or eleven, two important changes usually take place in their lives. Firstly, they leave the herding of cows to their younger brothers, and themselves begin the business of hoeing the fields which will occupy them until they die; secondly, they no longer sleep in the houses of their fathers but join an age-village of boys. Nowadays the two changes usually, but not always, take place at the same time, and well before puberty.

[1] cf. Xhosa *intanga*, 'a company of persons or animals of equal age'.

[2] The herd group is smaller in young men's villages where few are cattle-owners, and a very rich man occasionally herds his cattle alone.

[3] G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, pp. 51–3.

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different herds of cattle; and it is not only those from the same group of herd-boys that set up a new village together, but all the sons of the age-village. Thus when a boy leaves the herd group he joins a larger community, including the friends of his own age who have herded cows with him, and many others as well. Every boys' village consists primarily of the sons of the member of an older village who originally gave the land for its building, but sons of other villages live there too.

The village begins with perhaps a dozen boys, and their younger brothers join them, one by one; but after some years, when the senior members of the boys' village are between sixteen and eighteen years old, the younger ones begin to be refused admittance to the village: 'they are children.' The young ones then either begin a new age-village of their own, or else join a village which has already been started by the sons of a nearby men's village a little junior to that of their own fathers. If you inquire who are the members of such and such a boys' village you are always told that they are the sons of a particular village of men, but detailed investigation reveals the presence of some sons of other men's villages as well. Brothers, half-brothers and other relatives are sometimes members of the same village, but more often not; and if they do belong to the same village that is because they are near each other in age, and were born in the same village, not because they are kinsmen.

The members of the older boys' village, which is now closed and no longer increases in numbers, begin to marry as they reach the age of about twenty-five. Getting married is often a gradual process; but it is not until he has his wife permanently with him that a young man can have fields of his own and eat the produce at his own place. The cultivation of land requires the co-operation of a man and woman, and cooking on any elaborate scale is a woman's business. As the young men marry their village expands. The site is not changed but the houses are built ever bigger and farther apart, and adjacent land is brought under cultivation. The boys' village with which we are best acquainted is in this transitional stage. It has fifty-three members altogether, the majority of whom are single; but some few are married, cultivate their own fields with their wives and eat food cooked by their wives in their own houses. Of those who are single some again are betrothed to girls who visit them from time to time, but each

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582 241 621 still cultivates his father's fields and eats at his father's home. In former days, we were told, the marriage age of men was even later than it is at present (*vide infra*, p. 80). 'Perhaps after twenty a boy would be betrothed, but to a young girl, and he would wait eight years before she grew up.'

857 From the time boys begin to herd they recognize one of their number as a leader. 'When we herd cows as boys', a friend told us, 'there is always one who is obeyed by his fellows whatever he says. No one chooses him, he gains his leadership and his prestige by bodily strength. For always, when we are boys together among the cows, we vie with one another and dispute about going to turn back straying cattle, or about fetching fire to cook the food we have brought with us. And so we start fighting, and we go on fighting until one of us beats all his fellows completely and so becomes the leader. And then it is he who sends others to turn back straying cattle, to fetch fire and to collect firewood. And he is greatly respected. He settles quarrels too. What we quarrel about most as boys is a particular insult: one says to another: "You are only a child, you are, I am your senior." This is always happening and then it is the part of the one who is leader to set those two on to fight. We all stand round and watch and the one who first cries is proved the child.'

622 Later, when the boys have built apart from their fathers, one of their number is often appointed by the headman of their fathers' village to settle disputes between them. Some boys' villages have no such appointed leader, but many of them do. Such appointments are, however, temporary. It is only when political authority is transferred to their generation that the young men's permanent leaders are chosen.

b. The 'coming out' ceremony

561 622 621 643 Eight or ten years after the young men of the senior boys' village of the chiefdom have begun to marry, their fathers hand over the government of the country to them. This transfer of authority is effected in an elaborate ceremony called the 'coming out' (*ubusoka*).

The 'coming out' is a series of legal acts by which the country of an old chief and his village headman (*amafumu*) is, with certain reservations, handed over into the possession and control of his

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two senior sons and their respective village headmen. These legal acts are accompanied by much pomp and ceremony. It is at once the initiation of all the youth of the chiefdom into public life, the constitution of two new political units and the proclamation of two new chiefs. It consists not only of a series of legal acts but of religious ritual as well, action being taken to increase the personal qualities appropriate in a chief and his village headmen by treatment with medicines.

The 'coming out' comprises six main events: firstly, the public recognition of a number of age-villages of young men, and the selection of headmen to lead them; secondly, the magical treatment of young chiefs and headmen to make them dignified and powerful; thirdly, the public recognition of the two young chiefs; fourthly, a cattle raid; fifthly, the establishment of the young age-villages on adequate land; and sixthly, the marriage of the young chiefs.

When the eldest sons of his contemporaries reach the age of about thirty-three to thirty-five years the old chief is approached by his village headmen who say: 'The sons have grown up, let us make the "coming out" for them.' After a period of delay, for he is unwilling to relinquish his own honour and power, the old chief agrees, and the 'coming out' takes place. He fears lest he may fall ill from 'the breath of men' should he delay too long (*vide infra*, p. 134). His two heirs, together with all the boys and young men, whether married or single, who are sons of the old chief's contemporaries, are summoned to attend, according to their age-villages, at the old chief's principal house. When they arrive they wait there for several days, while the old village headmen discuss with their chief where to give the young men land, and whom they will select as headmen of the young villages. In many of the young village groups there are already leaders previously appointed by the village headmen of their fathers. If they have proved satisfactory their appointments are confirmed by the old village headmen; if not new ones are selected.

In selecting leaders of the young men's villages the old headmen look for men who are wealthy, who come from respected families, who have ability in judging cases, and are popular with their fellows; in the old days they looked also for courage and the ability to lead men in war. These qualities correspond to the village headman's functions. He should be hospitable to his

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a ruler.' It is relevant to add that cuttings of this tree strike easily in the soil and climate of Nyakyusa country. When a chief dies he is buried beside his trees, and gradually a thicket—a sacred grove—forms round them.

The young men spend much time feasting and dancing. Formerly not only did they raid cattle for food from neighbouring chiefdoms, but they also took cattle, milk, and bananas from their fathers' villages. And they still do the latter, for they say: 'We are now the owners of the country.' The milk and bananas are often sent by the old chief, but 'if the chief is stingy, they teach him a lesson by going and *taking* bananas, saying: "We are important people." ' Great emphasis is laid on this right of the young men to take food: one group, the mates of the first heir of a senior chief, boasted to us: 'We came out with grandeur, we ate many men's cattle.'

After a month or two the members of each new village move off to build on a site of their own, and the wives of those who are married join them. Wives do not come to the first temporary shelters. The senior of the new villages remains on the site of the temporary shelters where fire was made, the ritual trees planted, and the hearth-stones of the senior headman established with magic. Gradually each member builds himself a permanent hut.

The old men move aside to make room for their sons. If land is short they may move on to the site on which a boys' village formerly was, or there may be other land available. Whatever the position, adequate land must be provided for the young men's villages. And, we were told, 'We old men are glad to move, we are glad our sons are so many and we leave the land to them.' Or again: 'The old men move because new fire has come; the young men have made themselves into new people, hence they cannot build on their old sites but on new ones. Perhaps the old men will succeed them, for they may build in the boys' village where their sons were, or if there is space they go elsewhere. But the old men rejoice greatly, for their sons have "come out".' Nevertheless there are sometimes disputes between villages of different generations regarding a particular site (*vide* Document, p. 188).

A few months after the 'coming out' each of the two young chiefs marries two wives. A young chief may be married already; but the two whom he now takes rank as his great wives (*abehe*

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the establishment of the mother of an heir in each, the future division of the country is foreshadowed. Finally, it is the occasion on which power is formally handed over to the younger generation, and the success of the new headmen as war leaders is put to the test.

c. Relations between villages within one chiefdom

Within each chiefdom, then, there are two sides, each under a senior headman. On each side are two or more age-villages of contemporaries of the chief—men of the ruling generation. Attached to these villages are boys' villages made up of the younger brothers and sons of contemporaries of the chief. They live separately from their fathers and may have their own village leaders, but legally each boys' village is subject to the authority of the headman of its parent village. On each side there are also two or more villages of old men, contemporaries of the chief's father, whose headmen have ritual functions. Each village established at a 'coming out' ceremony has considerable autonomy under its own headman, but it is subject to the senior headman of the side it belongs to in two ways: cases not settled by a village headman go to the senior headman of the side, and a senior headman leads the villages of his side in war and communal hunts. Even villages of old men are subject to the authority of the senior headman of the ruling generation on the side of the country where they live. Boys and young men of the generation which had not yet 'come out' used to fight and hunt as village groups under the leadership of the senior headman (of their fathers' generation) on the side of the country to which they belonged. Whether or not each boys' village was also subject in war and chase, as in legal disputes, to the authority of the headman of its parent village is not clear. Certainly each boys' village formed a defined segment within any larger group.

To recapitulate, there are always villages of three generations in existence—those of contemporaries of the late chief, the headmen of which have ritual functions; those of mature men, contemporaries of the ruling chief, whose headmen have administrative and military functions; and those of boys and young men, contemporaries of the heir, who have not yet 'come out', and who fight under the leadership of their fathers' senior headman.

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Sometimes, as we shall see presently, villages of a fourth generation exist also.

Each age-grade, or generation, covers a span of 30 to 35 years, and each village comprises an age-set with a span of 5 to 8 years, though this is longer in sub-chiefdoms (*vide infra*, p. 37). The average age of members in each grade varies with the date of the last 'coming out' ceremony. Just before the ceremony the elders with ritual functions are those over 65 or 70; the mature men of the ruling generation those between 35 and 65; and the 'boys' who have not yet come out, those between 10 and 35. Just after the ceremony the ruling generation consists of those between about 10 and 35, anyone over 35 being an elder. Those just too young to participate in one 'coming out' may be just too old to participate in the next. The village of Katumba in Mwaipopo's country was in this position: it had been created after the 'coming out' of the young chief Mwankuga, but informants were uncertain whether or not it would be established as a separate village at the 'coming out' of his heir Mwanyilu (*vide* Document, p. 183).

The two senior headmen of a new chiefdom are chosen from the two senior villages established at a 'coming out' ceremony, so that a commoner's chance of holding high office is greatest when he is just a little older than a chief's heirs. The senior village of one generation begets the senior villages of the next (*vide* Document, pp. 181-5). Thus, though the son of a village headman in one generation cannot become a village headman in the succeeding generation, there is a tendency for leadership within the chiefdom to pass from one *group* of men to their sons. Those who participate in a 'coming out' while very young tend to have least authority in the country, and are superseded when still under forty by the generation of their sons. The immediate contemporaries of a chief, i.e. those with whom he lives during boyhood, have a special bond with him all through life; and it may sometimes happen that when a chief dies young and is replaced by a brother (his own son being too young to inherit) a junior village comes into prominence because its members have been 'the companions' of the new chief. Bulindanajo in Mwaipopo's country was a village of this kind: Mwaipopo I had died young, and was succeeded by his brother Mwaipopo II ('Mwambene') who had 'come out' as a youth in Bulindanajo; and his immediate contemporaries from that village maintained a special bond with him.

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CHAPTER VII

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AGE-VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

a. The peculiarity of Nyakyusa villages

VILLAGES in which contemporaries live together permanently have not been reported among any people in Africa other than the Nyakyusa; such villages are not found among their neighbours, and diligent inquiry from Africans of many tribes has not revealed them elsewhere; it is possible that the Nyakyusa system is unique, but we still know too little of Africa to be sure. A similar system might well exist elsewhere without having been noted by Europeans. The fact that Nyakyusa villages were organized on an age basis was not recorded either by the missionaries[1] or the Administration, though the system of Indirect Rule had been in operation for eight years before we began work in the district.

What is common in Africa is for groups of male contemporaries —age-sets—to live together in temporary villages or club houses before marriage. The warrior-villages of the Masai,[2] the regimental barracks of Zulu[3] and Swazi,[4] the cattle posts of Tswana[5] and Pedi,[6] are all occupied by groups of contemporaries; while among the Kikuyu[7] and the Kipisigis[8] local detachments of age-

[1] D. R. MacKenzie, *The Spirit-Ridden Konde*, speaks of 'small boys' living in 'tiny houses' of their own (pp. 27–8); J. T. Hamilton, *Twenty Years of Pioneer Missions in Nyasaland*, says: 'The elder boys live together in long oblong houses at the end of the village. When one of them marries he builds a house near the boys' quarter, and in this manner the village extends in this direction.' (p. 40.) He does not suggest any further separation of the generations.

[2] L. S. B. Leakey, 'Some Notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony', *J.R.A.I.*, LX (1930), pp. 185–209; D. Storrs Fox, 'Further Notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony', *J.R.A.I.*, LX (1930), pp. 447–65.

[3] E. J. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, pp. 261–7.

[4] H. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, pp. 117–37.

[5] I. Schapera, *Native Land Tenure in the Bechuanaland Protectorate*, pp. 25, 220–9.

[6] G. M. Pitje, *Some Aspects of Male Education among the Pedi and Cognate Tribes*. (Thesis accepted for the M.A. degree in the University of South Africa. Unpublished.)

[7] W. S. and K. Routledge, *With a Prehistoric People*, p. 118.

[8] J. G. Peristiany, *The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis*, pp. 49–51.

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sets have club houses in which young men sleep. Among the Cewa, though boys do not move out of the parent village, they have a special hut in which they sleep together from the age of five or six.[1] But among all these people the age-set scatters at marriage, each young man building his permanent home, to which he brings his wife, alongside his kinsmen or, in the case of the Cewa, alongside his wife's kin.

The peculiarity of the Nyakyusa then consists in the fact that contemporaries live together permanently through life, not merely as bachelors: age-villages appear in an isolated area surrounded (so far as we know) by people with no similar institution.

We cannot hope to explain how, or when, age-villages developed among the Nyakyusa: there is no reference to them in such documents as exist, and we could trace no oral tradition regarding their origin. Even the historian Mwandesi (cf. p. vi) had no idea whether age-villages were introduced by the incoming Nyakyusa chiefs, or were found by them among the previous inhabitants of the valley, or were invented after the conquest. We can, however, inquire into the social characteristics associated with age-villages. *What are the peculiarities of Nyakyusa society not found in societies with kinship villages*? In this chapter we attempt to answer that question.

b. Age-villages and incest

The Nyakyusa themselves associate living in age-villages with decency in sex life—the separation of the sex activities of successive generations, and the avoidance of incest. When asked why small boys build apart from their parents they refer to the danger of a growing boy overhearing lewd talk between his parents, or seeing them unclothed (*vide supra*, p. 82); and they enlarge on the difficulties of father- and daughter-in-law avoidance were father and son to live in the same village—an avoidance which is consciously related to the fear of incest between father- and daughter-in-law (*vide supra*, p. 85). We may add also the fear of young men seducing their fathers' junior wives, who are often girls of their own age. Nyakyusa informants did not mention this last point as a reason for living in age-villages, but it is significant

[1] A. G. O. Hodgson, 'Notes on the Achewa and Angoni of the Dowa District of Nyasaland Protectorate', *J.R.A.I.*, LXIII (1933), p. 129.

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g. Kith and kin

602 621 The tendency to identify neighbours and kinsmen—kith and kin—appears not only in religious belief, the two groups being credited with somewhat similar mystical power; but also in verbal usage—'fathers of the village', 'mothers of the village', 'sisters of the village', etc.; in the obligation to respect a father's fellows, to run errands for them and obey their orders; in the belief that a father's neighbours are insulted by an insult to the father, and must be pacified as well as the real father; and in the responsibility of villagers for certain torts of a fellow. The distinction between neighbours and kinsmen is, however, clear-cut in marriage, in rituals, and in the control of cattle. Fellow villagers marry each other's daughters; they neither perform the elaborate ritual at death or twin birth believed to be necessary for the safety of relatives, nor are they required to help each other with cattle for marriages, funeral rites, and fines, as are kinsmen.[1]

Kinsmen are bound together by their common interest in the inherited stock of the lineage and in the cattle coming in for its daughters; by co-operation in cultivation and building; and by the belief that they are mystically interdependent—the contagion of defilement and of certain diseases caused by sorcery travelling along the roads of kinship. Village neighbours are bound together by occupation and ownership of common land; by co-operation in herding and cultivation; and by common defence against enemies 'by day and by night'. In both groups discipline is thought to be maintained by mystical as well as material sanctions, the anger of neighbours bringing ill-health like the anger of senior relatives; and both groups have certain responsibilities for their members in relations with other like groups.

h. Relative social status

621 561 The Nyakyusa material suggests certain further connections between the age-village organization and other aspects of the social structure which comparative study shows to be false. For example, it might be argued for the Nyakyusa (as it has been for

[1] Monica Wilson, 'Nyakyusa Kinship' in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*.

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the Kikuyu)[1] that the equalitarian emphasis is related to the emphasis on age-organization. As we have seen, hereditary office exists among the Nyakyusa but the power of chief and hereditary priest is limited at every point by the power of the leaders of age-sets who are chosen each generation from among commoners. That democratic (i.e. non-hereditary) leadership is not a necessary concomitant of a developed age-organization is, however, proved by the fact that among the Zulu, Swazi, Pedi, and Tswana, whose military organization was based on age-regiments, rank is stressed, and the leaders of age-sets are always sons or kinsmen of the chief.

It is possible, however, that the low status of Nyakyusa women relative to men is partly dependent on the age-village organization. It is most obviously related to the high degree of polygyny, and the fact that the position of the various wives is not clearly determined by date of marriage, birth, or allocation of property. For a commoner the first wife betrothed is his great wife, who takes precedence in ritual, but there is no ranking of houses and allocation of the bulk of property to different houses as among the Nguni, nor the same strong pressure on a husband to visit each wife in rotation. Instead there is acute competition between a man's various wives for the position of favourite, with a disportionate share of milk and meat and of her husband's attention. We do not suggest that there is no competition among the wives of a Pondo or Zulu polygynist, but we argue that competitive tendencies have freer play among the Nyakyusa,[2] and that this competition depresses the status of women in relation to men.

Like the kinship organization, the age-village organization favours men. As we have seen, a main end of age-villages, in the Nyakyusa view, is to allow men the enjoyment of congenial company, that is the company of friends and equals. A village consists of a group of male contemporaries and their dependants; ideally, the men live together all their lives and form a close-knit group of equals, between whom mutual loyalty, hospitality, and affability is fostered from childhood. Those who move tend to go to villages in which they already have close friends. The women,

[1] J. Kenyatta, op. cit., pp. 186–9.

[2] Unfair division of milk between wives is said by some Nyakyusa to anger the ancestors who cause the cows to give blood in place of milk; nevertheless unequal allocation of milk is a much commoner cause of complaint than it is among the Pondo.

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on the other hand, come from many villages, and they move from village to village more than men, because most women are inherited at least once in their lives. Nor do the women form an age-set, for men inherit wives as old, or older than themselves, and they continue to marry young brides until they themselves are elderly. A village thus contains women of all ages, the older ones often being quite late-comers to it. There is neither the unity of a kinship group, with leadership of mother or grandmother, as among a matrilineal people like the Bemba, nor the leadership of the mother-in-law as among the patrilineal Nguni and Sotho peoples. It is true that among the latter peoples the leadership of women devolves on a man's senior wife when his mother is dead, but the pattern has developed in a society in which daughters-in-law usually live for a long time in the same homestead as their mother-in-law, whereas among the pagan Nyakyusa a woman rarely joins her own son until she is decrepit, long after his marriage. When the Nguni or Sotho chief wife is obeyed by her co-wives it is as the successor of her mother-in-law; indeed on the latter's death she is often referred to by junior wives as 'mother'. Where women have authority in a patrilineal society it is usually as mother, or grandmother, or father's sister. But there are none with such positions in the context of the age-village; the office of headman is not hereditary so there is no mother of the heir, and the headman's own mother and sisters normally live elsewhere.

Such solidarity and leadership as exist among women in pagan Nyakyusa society are within the group of women of the same lineage who live together. Great emphasis is laid on the propriety of a wife bringing a younger sister, or brother's daughter, as a junior wife for her husband (*ukusakula*): this is felt to be a compliment to the husband and a comfort to the wife, proof that the marriage has been a success. Co-wives who are of the same lineage are very closely identified, their children being treated almost as full siblings, and they themselves co-operating in everything.

One of the marked changes in contemporary Nyakyusa society is the development of leadership among women in the Christian congregations.

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i. Constitutional form

Two other negative points are worth noting. First, the Nyakyusa fought among themselves and honoured a brave warrior, but they never developed a military kingdom, nor did they regard battle as the chief end of man. Emphasis on the value of war is not, then, a necessary concomitant of a developed age-organization, as a study of the Masai, Zulu, Swazi, and Pedi material might suggest. Secondly, the constitutional division of a chiefdom once every generation is not dependent upon the age-village organization, for such a division was common enough among the southern Nguni whose age-organizations were of relatively small importance. Among the Pondo and Xhosa the 'great son' and the 'right-hand son' of a chief very often both became independent; the main condition of their separation and independence being that there should be ample land in which they might live, each with his own followers.[1] Nyakyusa chiefdoms could divide in each generation because the Nyakyusa were an expanding population in relatively empty country.

j. Necessary conditions of age-villages

The limitations of the connections we have attempted to show must be realized. None of the characteristics cited are *correlates* of age-villages, for in each case either the age-villages could exist without them, or they could exist without age-villages: e.g. fathers- and daughters-in-law could not avoid one another completely if they lived in the same village, but the separate villages in which they live need not necessarily be age-villages; age-villages might be established though father- and daughter-in-law did not avoid one another; and so on. We claim only that these characteristics of Nyakyusa society which have been cited *partly* determine, and are themselves partly determined by, the age-village organization.

There are, however, certain other characteristics of Nyakyusa society without which age-villages such as we have described could not exist at all. The first of these is the redistribution of

[1] J. H. Soga, *Ama-Xosa Life and Customs*, pp. 25-49; M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, pp. 379-80.

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621 land in each generation. The territorial segregation of fathers and
• 561 sons is directly dependent upon the shifting of the old men after
178 the 'coming out' ceremony, without which the young men would not have sufficient land to establish themselves as a compact group on land adequate to support their growing families. Where no redistribution of land takes place, as on mission land and in the chiefdoms where the 'coming out' ceremony has been dropped, the territorial division between age groups becomes blurred within a generation.

621 Redistribution of land in each generation depends upon two
425 further conditions: the existence of ample land to support the
423 population, and relatively little development of land. As soon as
178 land becomes scarce those in possession of it are reluctant to agree to redistribution. It is significant that the most valuable land of all in Nyakyusa country—that in old craters—is *not* redistributed at a 'coming out' ceremony, but is retained by an individual until his death, and then inherited by kinsmen. And as soon as improvements are made in the form of planting long-term crops, or building durable and expensive houses, the difficulties of redistribution are increased. Nyakyusa land-law recognized the right of an elder who had moved, or of his son, to the bamboos and *imisyunguti* trees he had planted (*vide supra*, p. 46). But such rights become much more complicated when it is not only an odd clump of bamboos or two or three trees which are at stake, but a large patch of coffee; or when, in place of the old-fashioned long hut (*ikibaga*) built with the co-operation of kinsmen and neighbours, there is a more substantial house with expensive doors and windows made by an expert carpenter. It has been shown that where individual rights over trees or other long-term crops are recognized, and such crops are planted on a large scale, individual tenure of land, as opposed to a temporary right of usufruct, tends to develop.[1]

621 Secondly, the solidarity of the Nyakyusa age-village, as of
476 kinship villages in other African societies, is a function of a small-
178 scale society. Fellow villagers have been hitherto, and are still in a large measure, dependent upon one another for land, for aid in economic undertakings, for sympathy and good fellowship, and for protection 'by night and by day'. But such mutual dependence is visibly decreasing. In the economic field co-opera-

[1] C. K. Meek, *Land Law and Custom in the Colonies*, p. 28.

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supra, p. 84). The Nyakyusa pattern of avoidance has undoubtedly influenced that of the small groups absorbed by them, but they in turn have been influenced by these groups, and by the example of Christians of neighbouring tribes. In Ilolo avoidance between father- and daughter-in-law is much less strict than in Selya. This was attributed partly to the influence of neighbouring small groups of Nyika and Penja, who had not the same tradition of strict avoidance as the Nyakyusa, and partly to the influence of the Christians, whose number was proportionately greater in Ilolo than in Selya. As Nyakyusa informants argued: the pagans see Christian women disregard avoidance taboos, and they see that nothing dreadful happens to them (as the result of their neglect), so the pagans, too, begin to think that avoidance is of no importance.

The relationship between the generations is also modified among the Nyakyusa, as among other African people, by the power of young men to earn money and so command wealth. As we have seen, sons are in a position to *invite* their fathers to drink beer in the father's own homestead. Once fathers and sons have begun to *ukwangala*, drinking beer together, and once the horror of a woman seeing her father-in-law has diminished, then there is much less insistence on the need to buttress separation of the generations by territorial segregation. When convenient, fathers and sons will continue to live apart, but if a building site and arable land near his age-mates is lacking a son may suggest that avoidance does not really matter after all, and his father (if a Christian or a sceptic) may agree to the son building near him.

Nyakyusa age-villages still flourish, but they are hardly likely to survive many decades with increasing pressure on land, the planting of coffee and other long-term crops, the development of trade and migration, and a diminishing isolation from the ideas and values of the outside world. Age is no longer the sole basis for village grouping in Rungwe district—common belief and common occupation now provide other grounds for building together. There are Christian villages, an administrative station, a military station, and trading centres such as Mwaya, the Lake port. Tukuyu (the administrative centre) has its police lines, quarters for hospital attendants, traders' quarters, and so on, while Masoko has soldiers' and traders' quarters. This account of age-villages may therefore have some significance as a docu-

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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6. CHANGE IN THE RELATION OF FATHERS AND SONS

Record of G. W.

561 177 264 Mwambuputa, the headman, was building himself a new house with the help of six other men. He invited us to wait and join in the beer and bananas, which were about to be served.

A boy came to call two of the builders to enjoy the company (and food?) of some other friends. They went off. It turned out that these two were from the boys' village, Katumba, one being a 'son' of Mwambuputa, and the other a friend of this 'son'. They had been eating and drinking with the rest of us.

Q.: 'In the old days, would these two have eaten and drunk with you—boys with men? Would you have called them to help you build?'

'No, formerly that was not the custom. Though we should have called them to help us build, they would not have drunk beer, and they would have eaten their calabash of milk separately, over there (pointing to a corner of the hut), while we men were here with our food and beer.'

Q. 'How is it then that the customs have changed, that now you eat, and even drink, with them?'

'You brought it yourselves, you Europeans. You sit down with your children at table and eat together, and the Swahili do the same. So we say: "He! Formerly we hated our children!" We said: "Eat over there." Let us eat with them!'

Q.: 'No, that does not convince us at all. The Europeans are strangers. How many of you have been into a European's house and seen them eating? Only the house-boys!'

Mwambuputa: 'All right, ask the others!'

Mwalubunju: 'Let me speak! In the old days, because there was war, we objected very much to the young men drinking beer with us. If we all drank together and the war cry was raised we should all be defeated. And men did not begin drinking in the morning, never! They began in the late afternoon when the cows came home . . . and in the evening each went home to his own house . . . but now, since the country is at peace, the young men also drink beer.'

Q.: 'Yes, but still I don't see why you drink *with* them. Why not give them a separate pot? And you eat with them, too.'

Mwambuputa: 'Because, as Mwalubunju has said, the country has fallen to you. It is at peace and there is no war, so the young men buy

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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their own beer.[1] Sometimes my son brings his pot to my place and calls his friends, saying: "We will take the pot to mother's house. She will pour in water for us." Then they come to my place and they invite me to drink and I accept and we drink together. How then can I grudge my son beer when I have some? Did he and his friends not entertain me'?

[1] This, of course, is not so much a result of peace as of new opportunities of gaining wealth on the Lupa gold-fields and elsewhere, but to the Nyakyusa the two things go together as 'European times' (*ikisungu*).

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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One by one the villagers emerge from the houses, and
sit in the sun, greeting neighbours with a polite 572
"Have you slept well?" if there are any neighbours [576]
near. Then the husband milks the cattle, and the
boys come to drive them out to the pasture, where
they will remain until the early afternoon, when they
are again milked.

Generally the cattle sleep in the same house as their 231
owners, tied up to stakes fixed deep in the floor; but 592
where there are grown-up sons not yet married, a
separate house is built in which the parents sleep with
the little ones, while the young men guard the cattle
from raiding thieves.

The bed is frequently no more than a mat spread 513
on the mud floor, with a single blanket for covering,
and no pillow, unless it is a piece of roughly trimmed
wood. The more prosperous natives, earning good
pay in the employment of Europeans, have well-made
beds fully equipped, in many cases even with mosquito
nets hung from the roof. The poorer consider that
they have made a great step forward if they have
been able to save up enough money to buy a single
blanket, and not seldom even that belongs to the
father, the mother and children having to be content
with meagre coverings of calico or grass mats. But [354]
the house is warm, often too warm, for the fire is
always burning, the door is closed, there are no
windows, and there is no ventilation in the roof;
and all the inmates sleep with their feet to the fire,
which is in the middle of the floor.

Here and there one will come upon rows of tiny 342
houses, each built and occupied by two or three small 561

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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342 boys, who have grown too big to occupy any longer
561 the single-roomed hut in which their parents dwell. They are slender erections of reed and grass, and look as if a strong wind might carry them away; but the children live a happy, and not always innocent, life in these huts until they are able to build bigger ones for themselves.

291 Dress is more conspicuous by its absence than by its presence. During the day the women wear little but a long strip of bark cloth hanging down almost to the ground before and behind. The children usually have nothing at all, unless they have the good fortune to get a strip of cloth from a grandparent. They go about quite naked for the first few years of life, and a mission school usually reveals rows of children who consist of long legs and arms and smiling faces, wholly unconscious of need if they have a tiny rag strung in front, often not more than a few square inches in size. But the men who are earning money may be well dressed. The richer wear trousers and jacket, a shirt, a collar and tie, boots, if they are able to afford them, and a helmet. Their wives and children wear long robes of highly coloured cloths, and are no doubt observed with envy by their less fortunate sister-women, with little but a piece of bark-cloth to hide their nakedness. The average man, however, goes to church or market with a single garment, unsewn, flung over his shoulders, and covering, more or less completely, his whole body; but he goes to work in a scanty waist cloth, which leaves him uncovered below the knees and above the waist. Men

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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574 of more importance are the magistrate and the missionary, whose coming is usually heralded afar, by the report that he is already in the district, and is now perhaps only a day's journey off, slowly making his way from village to village, and dealing with whatever matters require his attention as magistrate or missionary. His coming is a matter of importance, for he will have a number of men with him who will need food, by the sale of which the villagers hope to make a few honest pence; though abundance of food is often given freely as a token of welcome. As the great man approaches the village, all the younger people come out to meet him with shouts of welcome, and if he is travelling in a *machilla*, the men will take the pole from the bearers, and with tremendous noise enter the village and deposit him at the school or the chief's house.

182 And the sadder side? Sickness, epidemics, the per-
●561 petual fear of witchcraft and of evil dreams fore-
578 shadowing ill, theft with its ever-present possibility of accompanying murder, quarrels that will not heal, forced marriages, and all the hidden cruelty that so rarely comes to the surface. Most pathetic of all, perhaps, the feud between old and young; the young all for to-day and to-morrow, for the new ideas, the hope of progress; the old for yesterday with its stability and ordered life; the young going in crowds to church, the old going secretly, and no doubt sadly, to worship at the ancient shrines, guarding the approaches lest the levity of youth should desecrate the place of terror, and evil come upon all the land; the

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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young gathering around the white man, and lending themselves to his purposes, the old even to-day approaching him with reluctance, if at all, for to them he still retains much of the awe and hidden power with which he was credited in the earlier days.

The individual Konde is not so popular with white men as are members of other tribes; indeed there are employers who will not knowingly give work to a Konde at all. As workmen, it must be acknowledged that they are both less active and less reliable than surrounding tribes; they are neither so intelligent nor so loyal to contract. The Konde soon wearies of effort, and longs to get back to the lowing of his cattle and his pretty little hut in its banana grove. He loves his children, and the hope of being able to clothe them if he works well, does not compensate him for prolonged absence. Loyalty, as the Henga, Angoni, and Yao are loyal, does not distinguish the Konde, who show loyalty rather to chief and to tribal custom, than to the white man with his problematical benefits. They have never attached themselves to the European, as many of the surrounding tribes have done; for the Konde are less convinced than others that the one hope of Africa is the European and his influence; less convinced, be it added, that Africa stands so desperately in need of saving. That may be due to their unawakened condition—and, again, it may not. Educationally, too, they are less advanced than other tribes. Only a few of them are to be found in Government offices, or doing the skilled work which commands such good pay from Europeans; nor have they supplied,

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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of the new area. Their culture differs from that of the indigenous tribes, so that they remain largely unassimilated. The cause of the exodus is partly shortage of land;[1] the Nyakyusa are skilled cultivators; the active soil-conservation campaign promoted by the Agricultural Department in Rungwe district involved farmers in additional effort, so that land in Mbeya was attractive in so far as the soil conservation scheme only started there two years later. The main motive, however, was to shorten the transport haul between the farmer and the market at Lupa. The demand for supplies of beans and grain from Rungwe district was decreasing even before the 1939 war, partly because production on the goldfields was declining, and partly because the produce of Mbeya district was increasing (largely through the work of the immigrant Nyakyusa farmers). The main problems for the administration arising from the Nyakyusa immigration into Mbeya district is the lack of control by the Native Authorities and congestion in the river valleys. The Safwa, who vacated the valleys of the Naofwe and Mbalizi rivers after their wars with the Sangu, retreated into the hills before the flood of Nyakyusa immigrants, who now populate the valleys almost exclusively with their own compact endogamous groups.[2]

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Kinship and Local Grouping

(The following section is compiled from information applying equally to Nyakyusa and Ngonde.)

The distinctive feature of the social organization is the system of age-villages. An age-village consists of a male age-group with wives of any age and children. When a man dies his heir may come to live in his village, and strangers applying for land are never refused on grounds of age, but the original constitution of the village is based on the principle of identity of age. Up to the age of ten years the small boys herd cattle in groups. Then they start to hoe for their fathers, and leave their fathers' houses to go to sleep with friends. After two or three years they build for themselves in an age-village of young men. They continue to hoe the fields and eat the food of their mothers until marriage, after which they hoe mainly for themselves, on land adjacent to their own huts.[3]

If a young man, instead of hoeing, goes out to work, he is expected to bring back tax-money for his father. By his service he earns the right to be given cattle for marriage. A young man whose father is poor in cattle will often attach himself to the household of a rich kinsman, brother of his father or mother, and hoe regularly for him, eventually receiving from him a large portion of his marriage cattle.[4] Sons-in-law are expected to bring their friends now and again to hoe for their father-in-law, who will afterwards entertain the workers.[5]

Descent and inheritance are patrilineal, but there are no clans, and no descent group with a common name and definite membership.[6] The sons of a group of effective kinsmen are not all themselves effective kinsmen, and in the third generation the bonds of kinship may often have been forgotten. Cattle exchanges signalize the most

[1] Wilson, 3, 1938, p. 7.
[2] Wilson, 1, 1936, p. 78.
[3] Ibid., p. 28.
[4] Hall, 1943.
[5] Ibid., p. 29.
[6] Ibid., 2, 1936, p. 267; 4, 1939, p. 2.

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936) 1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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583 Normally a bachelor is given cows one by one, over a period of years, and, as we have seen, he sends them, as he receives them, to the father of the girl he wants to marry. One cow is sufficient for betrothal, but not until he has given three can he begin openly to sleep with her. And he cannot usually set up his own economy until he has given at least three cows and she has reached puberty and been initiated. He may of course bespeak an already grown girl, but if he engages himself to a young one he is expected to bring two or more bulls as well, during the course of her initiation.

684 If he chooses to spend his cows in adultery fines, he may, but he will then have to wait longer to get married.

582 Thus the system of marriage by a transfer of cattle is, in this society,
●561 directly linked with a late marriage age for young men and with a privileged position for older men. When a boy gets cattle he at once gives them to an older man in order to secure his daughter as a wife; the labour of every bachelor helps to increase his father's wealth in food; it is in general the older men alone who can afford more than one wife. And there is an average difference of ten years or more in the initial marriage age of men
[162] and girls. The tax registers show in part of the district, among 3,000 adult[8] men, 34% bachelors, 37% monogamists, and 29% polygynists; and investigation proves that, generally speaking, it is the young men who are bachelors, the men over forty-five who are polygynists.

511 Though cattle are their most valued form of wealth, it is on agricul-
574 ture that the economy of the Nyakyusa is primarily based. Meat and milk are luxuries, and daily bread comes from the fields. Hard work in a fertile country provides food for each family, and the millet beer which is the ordinary material of hospitality. Hospitality brings a man prestige and authority among his fellows; on the possession of sufficient food largely depends the contentment of his wives. And in the production, preparation and eating of food the relationships of the family and of the individual family within it, are clearly visible.

241 Hoeing is the work of men, planting, weeding, reaping and cooking
512 is the work of women. The men, young and old, hoe for about four hours on most mornings of the year; in the lower altitudes they begin well before sunrise and finish about 9 a.m., on the upland plateau they begin later and continue till noon or beyond. The energetic ones sometimes hoe again for an hour or two in the late afternoon. Different

[8] Presumed to be 18 years or over.

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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law to all his classificatory brothers. The normal routine of life is 606
constantly interrupted by women's avoidance of these men, they crouch and hide and make wide detours to avoid them, a man comes into a room and a woman runs out hastily, a father cannot enter his son's house while his son's wives are cooking there, ceremonies are duplicated to avoid bringing them in contact. Few people seem to realize the meaning of 606
this taboo, but occasionally a man is found who tells a story which makes 773
its function abundantly clear. It is said that an old chief, long ago before the taboo was instituted, fell in love with his son's wife and took her, and such was the horror of everyone at what he had done that this taboo was instituted. This story expresses the necessity, in a society where the old men are accustomed to take the young women as wives, of guarding in some way against the possibility of a father desiring his own son's wife for himself; more particularly perhaps because the cows for her marriage have come from him.

This taboo, separating father and daughter-in-law is one of the 606
reasons for the age-village system which we must next discuss. For in 621
Nyakyusa society father and son live in different villages.

Age-Villages

The most characteristic relationships of the Nyakyusa people are 621
those which centre in the age-village. Villages and age-groups are 561
common enough in other societies, and are familiar to all of us, but it is rare to find them combined; it is very uncommon to find, as we do among the Nyakyusa, that local groups of contemporaries live together for most or all of their lives.

Age-villages are formed by groups of men, all roughly of the same age, their wives and young children. Women belong to the villages of their husbands, young children to those of their fathers. The number of households in an age-village varies, but thirty is probably a fair average. Girls, as we have seen, live at home until they marry, which they normally do soon after puberty, and then each goes to the house and joins the village of her husband. But boys, who marry later in life, leave home at about the age of ten or eleven and set up villages of their own.

(*a*) *Herd-Boys*

Between the ages of about six and eleven the boys sleep at their 857
fathers' houses and herd their fathers' cattle. This is a full-time if not a very arduous occupation; the cattle are driven out about an hour after sunrise and return to be milked about 1 p.m.; after an hour they are again driven out and do not come back until nearly sunset. The cattle of eight

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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As the boys one by one reach the age of ten or eleven, two important changes usually take place in their lives. Firstly they leave the herding of cows to their younger brothers, and themselves begin the business of hoeing the fields which will occupy them until they die; and secondly they no longer sleep in the houses of their fathers but join an age-village of boys. These two changes usually, but not always, take place at the same time and normally at about the age of ten or eleven years, well before puberty. But there are cases where special circumstances put the age of one or both of these changes later; I know one boy who herds his father's cattle although he has reached puberty, because he has no younger brother old enough to take over, and there are only five or six boys in his herd-group altogether. And in general I am told it is not uncommon for some boys who have reached puberty to be found still herding cattle. Again in one age-village the boys leave home a little later than usual because there are leopards about and it is dangerous for small boys to walk from the village of their fathers to that of the boys after dark.

(*b*) *The Boys' Village*

When a fair number of the sons of a village of married men have reached the right age, their fathers give them a piece of land to one side of the parent village on which to build. There they build little huts of reeds for themselves, sufficiently well-thatched to keep out the heavy rain, and there they sleep. The building of the huts on this land begins, in a playful manner, before the boys move. While they are still herding the cows and sleeping at home they build minature huts there in their spare time, but do not sleep in them. When they move they build slightly more substantial huts with a better thatch. Until he marries each boy hoes his father's fields in his father's village and eats food cooked by his own mother at his father's house. But he sleeps with his friends. Thus between the time when he leaves home and his marriage each is a member of two villages, economically he still belongs to that of his father, socially to that of his own contemporaries. Though bachelors eat at their parents' homes, it is very rarely that they do not eat in the company of their own friends. A bachelor does not simply go home to eat but a group of bachelors, friends of the same boys'-village, go round together eating at the house of each one's mother in turn.

In an age-village of married men there are always several different herds of cattle; and it is not only those from the same group of herd-boys that set up a new village together, but all the sons of the age-village. When a boy leaves the herd-group he joins a larger community, including the friends of his own age who have herded cows with him, but many

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936) 1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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621 others as well. Any boys' village is found to consist primarily of the
561 sons of the members of some older village who originally gave the land for its building, but as we shall see later sons of other villages live there too.

621 At the beginning, when a group of boys starts a new age-village, or
342 when boys join one already formed, they do not all have a hut to themselves, two or three friends share a hut. But later, as they grow older, each builds for himself. The younger ones build their huts of reeds, but the older ones try to get a few bamboos from their fathers or senior relatives and build more solid houses. Married men build entirely of bamboo, but often in a boys' village you will find a compromise between bamboo and reed, both being used in the same house; and the houses of bachelors, even though they be all of bamboo, are smaller than those of married men. The technique of good building is not very difficult, and the older boys instruct and help their juniors, as they join the village, to improve the skill playfully acquired as herd-boys so as to build more substantial huts.

245 The chief food of the Nyakyusa is the banana; men plant bananas
262 immediately round their huts, though their fields are mostly at a distance. And bachelors, while they continue to eat their main meals at their parents' village, plant bananas round their own huts as well. Bananas begin to bear very quickly, sometimes within a year of planting, and so, soon after the establishment of a boys' village, its members have bananas of their own, which they cook for themselves and eat with their friends at odd times during the day. But they have as yet no fields.

864 There is no formal initiation of boys at puberty; but, on the other
[881] hand, the custom of leaving home and joining a boys' village is directly
577 connected by the Nyakyusa with their ideas of decency in sexual life. They think it is perfectly all right to discuss sex openly among friends of about the same age but altogether wrong to discuss it either in the presence of, or with, their parents or those of their parents' generation. If a boy learns about love-making, in any way, from his parents the Nyakyusa think that he will not respect them properly and that he himself will be a fool. A boy must learn these things from his immediate seniors and friends. One man said to me: "If a boy after about ten years old stays at home to sleep, he is laughed at by his friends and his own parents send him away. They say: 'If he sleeps at home he will hear what his parents talk about at night, the night is always full of lewd talk; and he may even see them undressing. He will grow up a fool, with little wisdom.' You see at the boys' village" he went on to say, "the older

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936) 1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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621 system that small cases between neighbours are always first discussed and
868 often finally settled in the presence of some friend or friends who act as
867 arbitrators, without recourse to the constituted political authorities. Small disputes about petty theft, the possession of a cloth or some coppers, the ownership of a banana stem and so on, are as frequent in the boys' village as elsewhere, and as elsewhere the people concerned often argue it out to a finish before some friend or neighbour. And by listening to such disputes, or participating in them either as judge or principal, the boys acquire rhetorical skill and some knowledge of law. In some boys' villages there is a recognized leader appointed by the political authorities of the chiefdom to settle graver disputes, in others there is not. The position of such a leader, where there is one, will be discussed later.

577 Above all the boys' village gives to its members the conversation and
621 company of more of their own contemporaries than did the group of herd boys, and company the Nyakyusa hold to be the greatest of educators. In the most explicit discourse I heard on the value of company my informant explained that cleanliness, together with rhetorical and conversational skill, were all learned in company. These are his exact words: "We say that it is by conversing with our friends that we gain wisdom; it is bad to sit quite silent always in men's company. A man who does this seems to us a fool, he learns no wisdom, he has only his own thoughts. And a man who does not spend time with other people is always dirty, he does not compare himself with any friend. We say that we learn cleanliness of body in company, the dirty ones learn from their more cleanly friends. Again if a man is accused to the chief and is unable to defend himself easily and with eloquence we mock at him and say: 'What is the matter with you? Do you live all by yourself? How is it that you are so foolish?' We think that wisdom and cleanliness are the two great things learnt in company. We think it is bad to live alone far from other people, such a man learns nothing; he never learns to express himself well, to converse pleasantly with friends or to argue a case with eloquence. It is better to live with other people."

621 At first the sons of the parent village continue to join the boys'
561 village as they grow up; but after some years, when the senior members of the boys' village are about seventeen or eighteen years old, the younger ones begin to be refused admittance to the village: "they are children." The young ones then either begin a new age-village of their own, or else join a village which has already been started by the sons of a nearby men's village a little junior to that of their own fathers. If you enquire who are the members of such and such a boys' village you are always told that they are the sons of a particular village of men, but detailed investiga-

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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tion reveals the presence of some sons of other men's villages as well. Brothers, half-brothers and other relatives are sometimes members of the same village, but more often not; and if they do belong to the same village that is because they are near each other in age, and were born in the same village, not because they are kinsmen.

The members of the boys' village, which is now closed and no longer increases in numbers, continue to grow older, and after a time they begin to get married. Getting married, as we have seen, is often a gradual process; but it is not until he has his wife permanently with him that a young man can have fields of his own and eat their produce at his own place. The cultivation of land requires the co-operation of man and woman, cooking on any elaborate scale is a woman's business.

As the members of a boys' village marry the village does not move but it expands. The houses are built ever bigger and further apart and the adjacent land is brought under cultivation. The boys' village with which I am best acquainted is in this transitional stage; it has fifty-three members altogether, the majority of whom are single, but some few are married, cultivate their own fields with their wives and eat food cooked by their wives in their own houses. Of those who are single some again are betrothed to girls who visit them from time to time, but each still cultivates his father's fields, and eats at his father's home.

(c) *The Men's Village*

It is now necessary to understand the system of men's villages and the general political organization in which the boys' villages finally take their place.

The number of age-villages in one chiefdom, all the members of which are married, varies with different circumstances, but the most usual number is from six to twelve. The age system is only broken by moving or by death; when a man dies his heir usually comes and lives where the dead man was living in his age-village. There he inherits the wives, the huts, the cows and the land of his predecessor, he inherits the dead man's position in the village and often takes his personal name as well. The heir may be many years younger than his new neighbours but he is now treated as their contemporary, he sits with them at ceremonies, he shares their rights at any division of meat. The age system in the villages is also broken by moving, for a stranger may come and be granted land in a village even though he is consideraly older or younger than the bulk of its members. But otherwise members of a village are roughly contemporaries.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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living representatives, to take their name, and to sacrifice at their groves, it was commoner priests who chose them and, as will be seen, put them to death when it was expedient for the good of the people. It is clear, too, from what source the commoners drew their power. The invaders were supposed to have brought into the country fire, cattle, crops, and iron; they were creators, the guarantors and preservers of fertility; and it was to foster and increase fertility that men worshipped and sacrificed at the groves of the mythical heroes. The aborigines, on the other hand, without fire, without iron, and feeding on raw meat as the myth depicts them, possessed one weapon of terrible potency, witchcraft, which no chief, not even a priest of the chief's lineage, could withstand or would dare to challenge. To the Nyakyusa the essential nature of the universe, established in history and in the institutions of their society, was reciprocity, a balance between chiefs and commoners, between cattle-owners and cultivators, between the creative power of the heroes and the black anger of the witches. The idea of a chief who was a dictator was as foreign as the idea of a single omnipotent creator. Moreover, there was a multiplicity of chiefs, no single central authority.

The heroic tradition, then, accounts for the differences between the chiefs and commoners and for the remarkable equilibrium that obtains between them. It accounts also, as we shall find, for the 'coming out' ritual, at least in part. It is strangely silent, however, about the origin of what is perhaps the most striking feature of Nyakyusa social life, the system of age-villages. The absence of any link between the myths of the heroes and the founding of age-villages is the more surprising in that the pattern of age-organization almost certainly came into the valley from the north-east. Only in East Africa was government based on age groups and the handing over of power from one generation to the next celebrated by whole communities. If the system of age-villages came in with the eastern invaders why is this contribution to civilized living (for the Nyakyusa regard village life as the essence of civilization) never mentioned? The only explanation we can offer is that the age structure is not necessarily linked with chieftainship, whereas the control of cattle and iron was the basis of power, and making fire was a symbol, not only of a new chieftainship, but of the vital creative force in the body of the chief. The heroic cycle justifies the relations between chiefs and commoners, but is not concerned with other institutions of the society.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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The age system of the Nyakyusa has been described in detail in *Good Company*,[1] but, since it forms the basis of their social structure, a brief explanation must here be given for the benefit of readers unacquainted with that earlier volume. Within each chiefdom there are a number of villages composed not of kinsmen but of age-mates. Villages begin when small boys of eight or ten years build together at a little distance from their fathers. They are joined by younger brothers, as these reach the age when boys stop sleeping at home, until the eldest are in their middle teens, when the youngsters will be told to begin another village. The boys of a village have their own leader, a 'natural' leader, not specifically appointed, but they are subject to the headman of their fathers' village, and formerly fought as a group under his direction. But at the 'coming out' a headman for each village is selected from among its members by the fathers: if he dies, his heir—a younger brother or son—inherits his position, so that sometimes a young man becomes headman of an old men's village, taking the name and social position of his father. Only commoners are eligible as headmen: we knew one candidate who was rejected because his great-grandfather was a chief.

Two villages in each chiefdom are senior to the others and their headmen are responsible each for half of the country. During the 'coming out' ritual the chief marries two wives, 'mothers of the country', and one is established in each senior village or capital (*ikitangalala*). The eldest sons of these two wives are the heirs, and later divide the old chief's country between them. Most of the chief's junior wives are divided between the capitals but some may be settled in a colonizing village in unoccupied country. All the chief's sons build with commoners in villages appropriate to their age, and all save the two heirs are subject to the commoner headmen of their villages. They are entitled to some respect as 'sons of the chief', and those of strong personality gain a following and settle disputes between their fellows (as may any commoner), but only the two senior sons can claim political authority.

Before the 'coming out' the villages of young men and their fathers adjoin, for the boys have built on their fathers' land, on the fringes of their fathers' villages. But at the 'coming out' there is a new deal in land. The young men are established in the centre of the country and their fathers move to the periphery; it is not merely that fathers and sons exchange land, but all the boundaries

[1] Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, 1952.

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are redrawn and only the fields in old craters (the most prized and fertile of all) are not re-allotted. Thus the villages of kinsmen of two generations adjoin, and often those of three generations.

On the old chief's death his village headmen become priests of the grove in which he is buried, and, in co-operation with his sons, the new chiefs, sacrifice there on behalf of the two countries into which his old chiefdom is divided. There is a nice balance of power between chief and village headmen in life, and when he dies his two heirs and the headmen (or their heirs) continue to share power, the power which belief in his spiritual force and their ability to guide it gives them. The success or failure of rituals is held largely to depend upon the personal relationships of the leading participants, chiefs and commoner priests.

Besides the ordinary commoner priests (the village headmen of a past generation or their heirs) there are priests of the chiefs' lineage, usually belonging to a junior line to which specific ritual functions, such as rain-making, have been entrusted, and whose office is hereditary in the same way as that of a chief. Kasitile (86),[1] the rain-maker, is such a priest: his grandfather was the brother of a ruling chief (43) and had been appointed as rain-maker (*umpelafula*) and priest (*unyago*), the two functions being separate but overlapping. As rain-maker Kasitile tended the rain stones, as priest he initiated the rituals in certain of the sacred groves, though he did not actually officiate himself. Kasitile was a key informant on ritual and a chapter is devoted to his history, since it epitomizes the relationships between chiefs and commoners.

As we have shown, most of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde chiefs claim some sort of kinship with one another. Those who are nearly related pray together at the groves of their common ancestors, and those more distantly connected join in sacrifice to their founding fathers, but in the communal rituals kinship is neither the dominant theme nor the exclusive principle of association, as it is in the rituals celebrated by private persons. In the communal rituals most of the priests are commoners unrelated to the dead who are honoured, and the sacrifices are held to benefit not only the descendants of the dead, but all those who live in the countries they once ruled. Nevertheless, the symbolism of the communal rituals constantly recalls that of the rituals of kinship; themes which pervade the death ritual recur again in the rituals of 'coming out' and 'cleansing the country'. This background is

[1] Numerals after a name refer to the genealogy of Nyakyusa chiefs facing p. 3.

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The balance between chiefs and commoners is explicit. So also is their dependence on *both* cultivation and herding, and it should be noted that, though the Nyakyusa speak of themselves as stock men, they are not pastoralists to the same extent as the Masai or the Nuer. The number of cattle in Rungwe District today is less than half the human population, and men traditionally have done the heaviest share of cultivation.

In every version of the myth the tension between father and son, or older and younger brother, is stressed. In Nyakyusa society the father (or his eldest son who replaces him) controls the family property and exacts obedience from his juniors who continue to show their respect after his death by sacrifices. The tale of Kyala and Lwembe celebrates the triumph of the junior. Thus, at the heart of the very ritual which sanctifies seniority there is the assertion of the victory of the son and younger brother. The myth expresses the aspirations of subordinates—of commoners and junior kinsmen—as well as the power of chiefs and seniors.

As we have already noted, the heroic cycle makes no reference to the peculiar Nyakyusa institution of age-villages. Their charter is a quite separate myth[1] which tells of a chief who looked on his daughter-in-law and loved her and took her, and this so shocked men that in future fathers and sons built separately, so that a father-in-law should never see his daughter-in-law.

There are other hints of the eternal theme. Besides the saga of Lwembe there is another quite different tale of the origin of fire, which is less often related. In it a girl who had angered her father by breaking his drinking calabash fled from BuKinga to the Nyakyusa valley, where she found people who ate their food raw. She made fire and cooked for them and 'all women came to her to learn to cook'. The long-necked calabash, used as a drinking vessel and in prayer to the shades, is a man's most personal possession destroyed at his death, and it stands for a husband, while cooking is a symbol of the sexual activity of women, so the myth is perhaps a drama of incest, but we have no direct evidence of this.

This last is the only tale in which a woman appears as a benefactor. In general, the mythology is that of a strongly patrilineal society in which men are dominant. The wives of Lwembe who walked behind their lord, shepherded by a lion,

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 85.

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CHAPTER IV

THE RITUAL OF CHIEFTAINSHIP

(a) THE 'COMING OUT'

THE ritual which arouses the greatest excitement in BuNyakyusa and in which every man, woman, and child participates, is the 'coming out' when the two heirs of a chief are acknowledged as rulers, and the government of the country is handed over to them and their village headmen.[1] This ritual occurs but once in a generation, when the chief's senior sons are between thirty and thirty-five years old; they, and their slightly older contemporaries and juniors 'come out' together. Should one, or even both heirs of a chief die after their 'coming out' and before their sons are grown up, the ritual is not celebrated again—it cannot be, for it concerns not individuals but a generation. Instead the young chiefs are replaced by their younger 'brothers', full or classificatory. And should a village headman die he also is replaced by his heir; the office does not lapse. Therefore there are two types of change in status: the great communal ritual when the old men retire and their sons take office, and the family ritual when a dead man is succeeded by his younger brother or his son. An *individual* may inherit from his father, succeeding to his office and moving into his homestead at any time, and when he has done so he is treated formally as a member of his father's generation; but the celebration throughout the chiefdom of sons succeeding fathers only takes place thrice in a century. Each chiefdom celebrates separately. There is no attempt to synchronize with neighbours.

It was usual, traditionally, for two sons to succeed their father, and divide his country between them. The division was foreshadowed at the father's 'coming out' when he married two senior wives and settled them in different sections of his country; but it sometimes happened that a chief had a favourite for whom he built separately, and whose son went through the 'coming out' with his brothers and became independent, unless he was defeated in war and subjugated. Even a son who had no expectation of a

[1] Neither of us saw a 'coming out' in full. Godfrey Wilson saw the conclusion of the coming out of the heirs of Mwangoka (24) in November 1935 and in April 1955 I was able to observe the territorial changes brought about by Mwanyilu's (117) 'coming out' in December 1953.

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symbol of potency,[1] and we suggest that this also is an element in the ritual of the 'coming out', for the fertility of the chiefdom is thought to be bound up with the virility of the chief.

There are a number of stories about the way in which Mwakyusa (38) surpassed his brothers and one of them tells how each brother made fire and set alight the pasture land (for traditionally parts of the pasture land were fired each season to provide fresh grass for grazing in the early spring), and the fires started by the elder brothers soon died out, but that started by Mwakyusa 'burned for a whole month'. This is interpreted as an omen of his greatness as a chief: fire, potency, lordship are inextricably linked.

At the 'coming out' all things are made new. No matter how crowded the country the young men must move to new sites and the shelters in which they live must be new, though, as will be shown, they do not necessarily move to *unoccupied* country. On their new site the young men live as bachelors, milking their cows and cooking for themselves on their new fires the meat of the cattle they seize, the bananas and grain brought by their wives and mothers. Meat is abundant, for the young chief now rules and has the right to take what cattle he chooses, even from the villages of the old men in his country. 'It was as if there were war, the young men seized cattle, food, and women', and though they did not fight their fathers directly, as the Meru did, they clearly asserted their power. And, as so common further south, the accession of a chief was the occasion for raiding the neighbours; the young men, we were told, went forthwith to test the efficacy of the magic spears and the medicines with which their chief and headmen had been treated. Or the chiefs might lead a battue to clear the country of wild pig, as Mwakatumbula (Mwambete 162) did directly after his 'coming out'. Well fed and exuberant, the young men dance and display their cattle, and entertain visitors lavishly, for every chief seeks to attract men to his country by his hospitality.

Then they set up the sign and memorial of the chieftainship; they plant cuttings of two species[2] of *ficus*, *indola* which is much used as a shade tree, and *umpandapanda* from which bark-cloth is made. Close to these the first house of the chief and that of his senior village headmen are built, and the trees also mark the

[1] Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 124, 143.

[2] When writing *Good Company* I mistakenly thought that two cuttings of the same species were planted. Cf. *Good Company*, p. 27.

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married. Thus, yet another bond is forged between chief and headman, for he who provides marriage cattle is 'father' to him who marries, and the chief's wives acknowledge this by avoiding the village headmen of the senior generation as they do their father-in-law. Once the chief's ritual marriage is complete the sex taboo is lifted and such of his men as are already married are joined by their wives. In theory, though not nowadays in practice, the taboo is observed until the marriage of the chief.

All through the ritual of the 'coming out' the idea of a new beginning is expressed—a new site for the villages, new houses, new fire, new power for the young men. The events of this ritual, the seclusion, the lying on a litter, the prohibition on washing, washing with medicines in the doorway of the hut, the admonition, are directly parallel to the events of the rituals of death and puberty which, we have argued in a previous book,[1] are dramatizations of death and rebirth. There seems little doubt that the 'coming out' is yet another celebration of this theme. The young men enter an enclosed house—that of the senior's mother—and 'come out' (*ukusoka*) renewed as a child 'comes out' (*ukusoka*) of the mother's womb. No Nyakyusa informant volunteered such an interpretation, but, when it was suggested, it was eagerly accepted as expressing the real meaning of 'coming out'.

(*b*) THE CHIEF'S MEDICINES

Reference has already been made to medicines used by chiefs and by village headmen at the 'coming out' and we must now examine them more closely. The great medicines of chieftainship are *ifingila* and their function is to create *amanga*, i.e. spiritual power, and *ubusīsya*, i.e. dignity, majesty, in order to make the chief fearful 'so that men obey him'. The medicines are comparable to robes of office for they are designed to give their user assurance and fill the commonality with awe. The Nyakyusa also think that chiefs and headmen should be 'heavy' with 'pythons in their bellies' which give them the power to see and fight witches. Without such a 'python' a chief or village headman cannot fulfil his duty of 'watching over the country by day and by night' and if a man is not born with one he may develop it through the proper use of medicines. This notion has been examined elsewhere.[2] The *ifingila* medicines are also thought to give courage and ferocity (*ubugasi*) in war, with luck in seizing enemy

[1] *op. cit.*, p. 205. [2] Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 97-102.

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CHAPTER VI

LAND AND POWER

643 561 423 THE crux of the chiefs' 'coming out' was a redistribution of power and of land, and we must pause in our description of the ritual cycle to discuss the relation between chiefdoms and villages and the land, and to consider more closely the balance of power between successive generations.

(*a*) THE TERRITORIAL ALIGNMENT OF CHIEFDOMS AND VILLAGES

173 361 Tradition makes it clear that the heroes came to a sparsely occupied country and that their descendants gradually spread out as their numbers increased. The settlers chose to live on hillocks overlooking the surrounding country. Lubaga and [103] Mbande, the seats of the two 'divine kings' are commanding sites. [778] The grove of Kabale, where the ancestors of the Kukwe chiefs first established themselves, is on an eminence rising from the plateau, and Kambasekela (near the Mbaka bridge) on which the early chiefs Mwaipaja (21) and Mwaipopo (26) were buried is a hill very like Mbande, overlooking the plain.

361 [824] Unlike most of their neighbours the Nyakyusa show a preference for cleared and cultivated land, planted with bamboos and the oil-bearing *unsyunguti* trees (*Trichillia supp.*)[1] as well as the great *umwali* (*Chorophora excelsa*) which, in their view, adds dignity to the homestead.[2] A study of the trees planted at the 'coming out' and the sacred groves in Mwaipopo's chiefdom (C 24)[3] shows that for four generations the ruling chiefs (descendants of Mwaijonga 82) have established their principal villages within a quarter of a mile of one another, and for seven generations the descendants of Mwakisambwe (30) have lived within two or three miles of one another (*vide* plan, p. 101), though there were acres of fertile land

[1] I am indebted to Mr. P. B. Nightingale, Forestry Officer, Tukuyu, for giving me the botanical names of these and other trees.

[2] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 77-8.

[3] C followed by a number is the reference number of a chiefdom as listed in the genealogies of chiefs.

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available which are only now being settled. Colonies are established, but usually by junior sons, the seniors remaining near where their fathers built; e.g. the descendants of Mwakasangule (22) remained near Lubaga, but Mwakisambwe (30) the junior heir moved to Mbyanga about 1750 and his senior great-great-great-grandson Mwaihojo (147) lives close to Mbyanga still, while Mwaijonga (82) the junior heir settled two or three miles away. Mwakyusa (38), a junior son not strictly an heir at all, but personally very popular, was defeated by his elder brothers and driven from the hills to the plain, where his descendants now live. It is not an invariable rule that the junior should move away—for example Mwambete (162) of the junior line lives close to Kambasekela where his ancestor Mwaipaja (21) is buried, and not Mwakibwele (182) of the senior line—but most often it is the junior who moves. The tradition is that the junior heir of a chief leads off his men as colonists at his 'coming out', and this may indeed have happened in the past, but the area of colonization in Mwaipopo's country (which we have observed over twenty years) was first opened by private individuals moving into unoccupied savannah forest land in search of virgin soil for cultivation, and lush grazing. The chief Mwaipopo asserted his claim to the area first by establishing a household there with some of his junior wives, and then by sending the son of a subordinate house (who could have no claim to inheritance of the chieftainship) to live there. Nsusa, the second village headman of Mwaipopo's heir Mwankuga (150), also settled in the forest and acted as headman of the men there, but whether his move was primarily to lay claim to the land or because he had quarrelled with his chief, Mwankuga, and the other village headmen, was never very clear.[1] Then in 1953, at the coming out of Mwankuga's heirs, the junior Mwabungulu (178) was established in the colony, and is regarded by the people as 'chief' of that area, though he is not recognized as a chief by the Administration.

When a colony is established several miles are left uncultivated between it and the parent chiefdom. Mwabungulu lives five or six miles from his senior brother Mwanyilu (177) and there is an area without homesteads between them. It seems that, traditionally, each chiefdom was surrounded by a belt of uncultivated land used as pasturage, and very often at the 'coming out' both brothers merely extended their villages on to the adjoining pasture land

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 268-9.

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leaving a strip of pasture between them, but when the area became crowded the junior heir would establish a colony at some distance. With the increasing density of population, and of the acreage cultivated by each family, the buffer strips between chiefdoms are disappearing.

The more closely related chiefs are the nearer their chiefdoms are likely to be, as will be apparent if the map on p. 87 is compared with the genealogies I and II, but the pattern of splitting and expansion was continually modified by conquest and absorption. For example, the descendants of Mwaipasi (81) of the junior line have no chiefdom, and the descendants of Mwamwifu (84) were defeated and absorbed by Mwaipopo II (116), and the junior house of Mwakisambwe (30) appears never to have established itself. His second son named in the genealogy, Mwamukinga II (44), was a full brother of the senior heir Mwamukinga I (43), not the heir of the second house. And of the descendants of Mwankyuse (33) only one heir appears to have established himself in each generation.

Although a chiefdom was surrounded by pasture land with unoccupied savannah forest beyond it, when the heirs 'came out' their fathers moved. The old men gave the senior heir a site in the centre of the country, not exactly where his father had lived, but somewhere near the senior village of the past generation, and the old men moved aside to make room for the new village. The old men's villages diminished in size for many members had died and not all the heirs had come to live where their fathers had lived, and the homesteads were built on the periphery of the young men's villages. Traditionally most of the cultivated land was reallocated at the 'coming out' also, but that no longer happens. Nowadays, even where the 'coming out' is celebrated, the old men continue to cultivate until their death most of the fields they cultivated before the 'coming out', vacating only their homestead sites and adjoining gardens. The dominance of the younger generation is reflected in their compact villages, forming wide, straight avenues, in central positions in the country, while the villages of older men are often split, and their homesteads scattered without order. The avenues are felt to contribute to the dignity of the ruling generation and the older men are content to withdraw that their sons may 'display themselves' (*ukuzinoga*).

[602] Age, territorial, and kinship grouping interlock in a complex

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fashion. Each village is occupied by an age-set and men are emphatic that age and friendship, not kinship, are the basis of a village, but the villages of fathers, sons, and grandsons commonly, though not invariably, adjoin one another, as Bujege, Igembe, and Lupando, or Lupondo, Njisi, and Iringa in Mwaipopo's chiefdom (*vide* plan, p. 101). Each section of a chiefdom comprises half the ruling generation, and interspersed with their villages are those of their fathers and sons. Men are identified by the name of their village, section, and chief; the village name defines their age-set, the name of section and chief their generation. The section name is always that of the senior village which leads it. Generation succeeds generation in office when their heirs 'come out', but the relative position of villages (age-sets) within a generation remains constant. Since chiefdoms traditionally split each generation at the 'coming out' the men of the retired generation who remained belonged to one section only; those of the other section of their generation were members of another chiefdom. The territorial arrangements reflected in the plan of Mwaipopo's chiefdom on p. 101 are modified by the fact that the chiefdom has not split for four generations. In generation I Kibonde was the portion of the junior heir, Mwafungo (83), but he died young and his land and widow were inherited by the senior brother, Mwaijonga (82). The son of this leviratical union, Mwakipesile (118), went through the 'coming out' in generation II along with Mwaijonga's heirs, Ijonga (114, representing her full brother 115), and Mwakabule (117). Mwakipesile inherited Kibonde and Mwakabule inherited Kituli, but both were later defeated in war by Mwaipopo II and their land incorporated in his chiefdom. Mwakipesile's heir, Likosyela, and Mwakabule remained as subordinate chiefs. Though the girl Ijonga celebrated the 'coming out' in place of her unborn brother she could not rule, and Mwaiteteja, son of Mwaijonga II (younger full brother of 82) acted for her. He was finally defeated by Mwaipopo II and fled to the periphery of the country. Kabula was his village, and he was subordinate to Mwaipopo, not independent.

In generation III the chiefdom did not split because by that time the British administration was in control, and the territorial division remained much the same, Igembe and Njisi becoming the senior villages in place of Bujege and Lupondo, with Mwankuga (150) and Mwaseba (152) as the young chiefs. Kibonde,

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177 Kituli, and Kabula still remained somewhat detached. In genera-
631 tion IV the second heir, Mwabungulu (178), has moved out to the
561 forest and the area occupied and ruled by Mwaijonga and Mwai-
popo is still one, with a division between Lupando and Iringa.
Kibonde is fully absorbed into Lupando, and Kituli and Kabula
into Iringa—no descendants of Mwakipesile of Kibonde and
Mwakabule of Kituli went through the 'coming out' with Mwan-
yilu as chiefs. Kibonde, Kituli, and Kabula are subdivided
into age-villages of three generations, but these are not shown
on the plan. They are spoken of by outsiders by the inclusive
names.

561 To a European the most surprising fact about the age-organiza-
tion is that a young man of the ruling generation may still choose
428 to move into the homestead of his deceased father or elder brother.
We knew one young man, who had been spoken of as a possible
village headman at the coming out of Mwanyilu, but shortly
before the 'coming out' he chose to move into the homestead of his
deceased father in Lupondo village (where his father in turn had
inherited) even though he might have inherited his father's
wealth in wives and stock and returned to his own village of
Masoko, after completing the ritual of death and inheritance. Our
informants insisted that, though the young men might rule, the
older generation were the more honoured, and in inheriting from
his father this man was classified as a member of his father's
generation. Nevertheless many young men do *not* choose to move
into the village of the father or elder brother from whom they
inherit, and the villages of old men decrease in size and finally
disappear altogether.

602 The relation between kinship and territorial grouping cannot
361 easily be indicated by plans and genealogies for though in theory
166 each village consists of 'sons' of a village of the previous
561 generation (as shown in the table facing p. 91) there is con-
631 siderable movement from one village to another, and the members
of any adult village usually prove to have come from a number of
different villages, though a boy's village consists of sons of adjoin-
ing villages. The table of members of three of the villages of
Mwaipopo's chiefdom illustrates this (*vide* pp. 224-6). An analysis
of genealogies showing where different members live gives much the
same picture. Though the shortage of land in the coffee-growing
chiefdoms of the hills and the rice-growing chiefdoms of the plain
is tending to obliterate the age-village organization, the old

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system is still the accepted form in Mwaipopo's chiefdom; the advantages of separating kinsmen in different villages are explicitly stated, and the contrast between the Nyakyusa and their neighbours in this respect emphasized. 'Certainly we do not live with kinsmen here but the Kinga do.' 'It is not good for a son to live close to his father, they will quarrel.' 'When we move to another village we consider friendship not kinship in selecting it.'

(b) THE BALANCE BETWEEN GENERATIONS AND SECTIONS

The ritual cycle of the 'coming out' and the sacrifices in the groves helped to maintain a balance of power between generations, as well as between chiefs and commoners. At the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu (177) in 1953 it was Mwabuputa, the senior village headman of his father, who took the leading part. He was described as 'the greatest man in the country' who 'brings out the chief' and his manner indicated that he was well aware of his power. During the reign of Mwaipopo (116) the power of his father's village headmen, Njobakosa and Ngulyo, was apparent at every ritual. Spiritual power was shared between chiefs and commoners, but exercised ideally by a virile chief of the ruling generation and the experienced headmen of the retired generation.

Those chosen as senior village headmen at the 'coming out' are commonly older than the young chief, but village headmen are thought of as surviving their chief—it is they who were responsible for smothering him, and performing the sacrifices in his grove. The headmanship is an *office* and so long as the office is necessary an incumbent is found for it, in the person of the heir of the original holder who is so closely identified with the deceased that most precise inquiry is often necessary to establish whether a given individual is the original holder, the succeeding heir, or a later heir, successor to the successor. The Ngulyo who officiated at the rituals in 1935 was the heir of the original Ngulyo (some said the *grandson*, not the son) and he was criticized by Kasitile as being 'a young man who knew nothing'. The principle, so familiar in Central Africa, of a perpetual office[1] emerges, among the

[1] I. Cunnison, *Kinship and Local Organization on the Luapula*, Communications of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute No. 5 (1950), pp. 14-15; J. C. Mitchell, *The Yao Village*, Manchester (1956), p. 122; A. I. Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*, O.U.P. (1939), p. 24; 'Some Types of Family Structure among the Central Bantu, in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, p. 224; J. Roscoe, *The Baganda*, London (1911), p. 3.

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Nyakyusa, when sacrifices are continued in the grove of a dead chief such as Mwakisambwe (30), for an indefinite number of generations, and the heirs of his senior village headmen serve as his priests, taking the name of the first holder of the office. Most of the priests of Lubaga held perpetual titles of this sort. The conception of the *corporation sole* is familiar enough in the western tradition, but European observers in Africa are sometimes confused by the use of a personal name and the almost complete identification of each holder with his predecessors, as well as by the practice of treating certain kinship relationships as if they were offices.

Generation was determined among the Nyakyusa by association with a chief. There was no name for those who 'came out' together other than that of their chief, who was the focus of the ritual. On the other hand, however, a 'coming out' concerned a whole generation, and it could not be held out of season. If the heir died he was replaced by a brother, as were Mwaipopo I (115) and Mwankuga I (150). If a chief had no male heir of the right age in his senior house his daughter might represent an heir. For example, at the coming out of the sons of Mwaijonga, it was a *girl* Ijonga (114) who performed the leading part in the ritual which fell due before the birth of Mwaipopo I (115). When Mwaipopo I was born and grew up he assumed office, but he died young and was replaced by his younger brother without a further celebration. Because the 'coming out' was thus linked to the maturity of a whole generation we have felt some confidence in assigning approximate dates to the arrival of the heroes. The period between each 'coming out' we estimate at thirty to thirty-five years, though the higher figure is probably more nearly correct. There must in fact have been some flexibility in the timing of the 'coming out' to account for the differences in the number of generations of ruling chiefs in different segments of the lineage. Some of the differences may be due to errors (e.g. it is possible that 70 is an elder brother not the father of 98, and that a generation has been omitted between Mwakapeje (54) and Mwakage (75), but even where there is little possibility of error the number of generations does not always tally.

In theory a man always belongs to the generation succeeding that of his father, irrespective of his age, provided he has not inherited from a man of the previous generation and taken his status, but in practice, since men often have sons of very different

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ages, they sometimes build in villages of different generations. When it comes to the selection of village headmen, however, care is taken to ensure that they are indeed sons of men who came out with the previous chief, and a village like Katumba which comprised both younger brothers and sons of Mwankuga's generation breaks up, some members 'coming out' with Mwankuga's son, others acting as 'fathers'. Within a village all the members are equal subject to their headman, but a hierarchy of villages is clear.

The pre-eminence of the two senior village headmen of a chief is marked. They alone make fire with him at the 'coming out'. They alone are handed war tails with which to lead their men in battle. Each is responsible for one half of the country and a dispute not settled by the headman of the village of the defendant is reported to the senior headman in whose side of the country the village lies, and he brings it before the chief. Each senior headman has his own village, the two senior villages of the country, in which the royal ladies live; the senior wife married at the 'coming out' is established close to the senior village headman, the second wife close to the second senior headman. A chief may establish wives in a number of villages, and some at least of those he inherits from his father continue to live in his father's old homestead 'to sweep the graves', but his capitals (*ifitangalala*) are the two senior villages of the country in which his two senior wives and two senior village headmen live[1] and the names of the capitals are used not only for the senior villages but for the half sections of the generation they lead. The importance of the two senior headmen is apparent even when their generation has handed over political authority to their sons. At the sacrifices we have described Njobakosa and Ngulyo, heirs of the senior headmen of the chief Mwaijonga (82) officiated, and at the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu (177) it was Mwambuputa and Kakuju his father's senior headmen who organized the ritual.

Each village established at a 'coming out' is a clearly defined unit with its own land, and leader, and name, but villages are also segments of larger units, the half-section of the chiefdom under a senior headman, and the whole chiefdom under the leadership of

[1] Mwanyilu (177), though he had two senior headmen, established his two senior wives in *one* house, close to the house of Kilasile his most senior headman. This was explained as a temporary measure 'because they were young', but it is not the traditional pattern, and may be linked with the fact that the splitting of the country each generation is no longer accepted as the inevitable pattern.

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the chief himself. The members of each village co-operate in some measure in cultivation and herding and they form a defensive group against attack 'by day and by night'—i.e. against armed raiders and witches.[1] But there is no great elaboration of ritual for single villages. Such village rituals as occur are connected with defence against witchcraft and involve driving out a supposed witch, or receiving back a member who has fled from fear of witchcraft, or protecting the village fields against witches.[2] Most communal rituals are organized on the basis of the chiefdom or group of chiefdoms, and villages or sections participate as segments of the chiefdom.

The principle of generation and that of section hold one another in check. All those who have 'come out' together have a strong sense of unity as opposed to the generations of their fathers and sons, but every generation is split into two sections each led by an heir of the chief, and these sections have a certain territorial solidarity. It is common in Africa for organized age-groups to cut across kinship and territorial groups. The Nyakyusa peculiarity lies in the territorial unity of age-sets which occupy villages, and the manner in which the fissiparous tendencies within a chiefdom have a constitutional outlet in the rivalry between the sections of a ruling generation which become independent at the 'coming out' of the next generation.

The combination of the hereditary and selective principles of leadership among the Nyakyusa is also somewhat different from that among their neighbours. With many Central African people the heir to the holder of the office of village headman or chief is *selected*, and the most capable member of a given lineage or lineage segment appointed.[3] Among the Nyakyusa succession is precisely defined and there is no selection of a suitable heir except to the supreme and greatly feared office of 'divine king', but the selective principle is given full scope in the 'catching' of leaders for the young men's villages at every 'coming out'. It is this combination of the hereditary and selective principles which binds together chiefs and commoners and successive generations. The rules of

[1] Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 44-66, 91-127.

[2] *op. cit.*, pp. 52-4, 109 ff., 154-6, 270-4.

[3] I. Cunnison, 'Headmanship and Ritual of Luapula Villages', *Africa*, xxvi (1956), p. 11; M. G. Marwick, 'The Social Context of Cewa Witch Belief', *Africa*, xxii (1952), pp. 219-22; V. Turner, 'Ndembu Village Structure', *Africa*, xxv (1955), pp. 123-4; J. C. Mitchell, *The Yao Village*, Manchester (1956), pp. 137-63.

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inheritance ensure that a limited number of young men are absorbed into the senior generation and live with the older men, sharing their activities and from time to time holding office as headmen or priests of that generation, and the selection in each generation of young men who are *not* the sons of village headmen, or chiefs, or headmen of the past generation, ensures that commoners without office are constantly recruited to the hierarchy of rulers. In short, power is distributed.

(*c*) RITUAL AND SECULAR BONDS

As in so many societies, economic and ritual links extended, traditionally, further than political links.[1] Selya was dependent upon BuKinga for iron and the Kinga came to fruitful Selya to pray for fertility. The priests who came to pray brought the hoes. The many independent chiefdoms of Selya and the Mbaka valley acknowledged the spiritual overlordship of the Lwembe by sending sacrifices to him, and it was through the network of hereditary priests like Kasitile, Mwamakunda, Mwalukuta, and Nyama of Selya, and the Kinga priests Kikungubeja, Nsyanigwa, Kyamba Kitali, and Silobwike that wider bonds were maintained. Mwaipopo (116) when he was granted a Court which gave him the secular leadership of Selya, failed to make any acknowledgement of Lwembe's traditional power, and it was Kasitile who later urged him to do so. The western chiefdoms of the Nyakyusa still buy medicines and bark-cloth from the Ndali to the west, and have done so for many generations, but no common ritual links them as it does Selya and the plain with BuKinga. The trade was of lesser importance than that to the east, for it does not seem to have included iron, though the Nyiha who share a common culture with the Lambya, the western neighbours of the Nyakyusa, are known to have been skilled smiths.[2] With the Sangu to the

[1] cf. E. Colson, 'The Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia' in *Seven Tribes of British Central Africa* (ed. Colson and Gluckman).

A comparison with the frontier in West and South Africa where economic and religious expansion compelled the establishment of Government is instructive. Cf. W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. ii, part ii, pp. 162-8.

[2] D. Kerr-Cross, 'Geographical Notes on the Country between the Lakes Nyassa, Rukwa, and Tanganyika', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vi (1890), p. 289. Elton's suggestion that some of the Nyakyusa iron came from the west is discounted by Cotterill. J. F. Elton, *The Lakes and Mountains of Eastern and Central Africa* (1879), p. 371 and map, cf. J. Thompson, *To the Central African Lakes and Back*, vol. i, p. 272.

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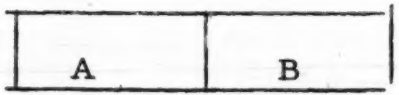
Chart showing position of sections of plan of Mwaipopo's Chiefdom. (Facing p. 100)



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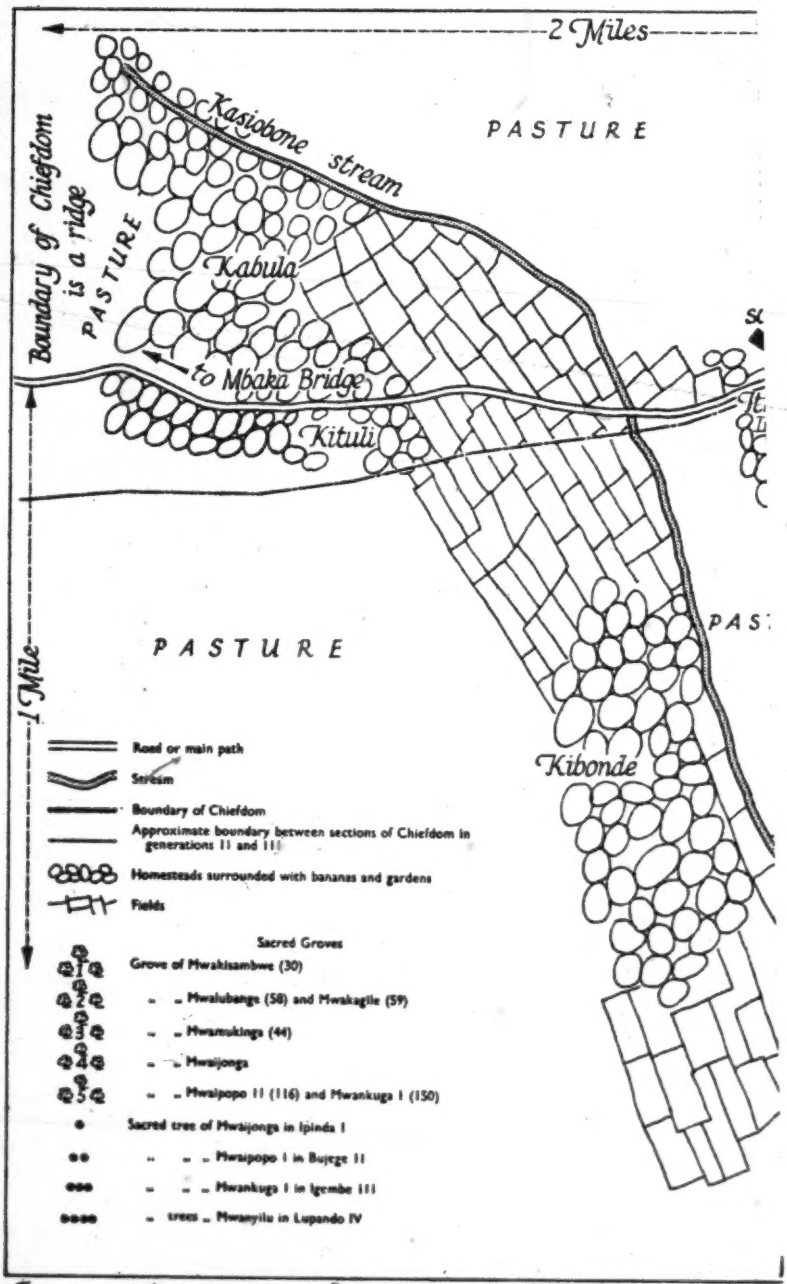

[facing p. 100; section A]

PLAN OF MWAIPOPO'S CHIEFDOM

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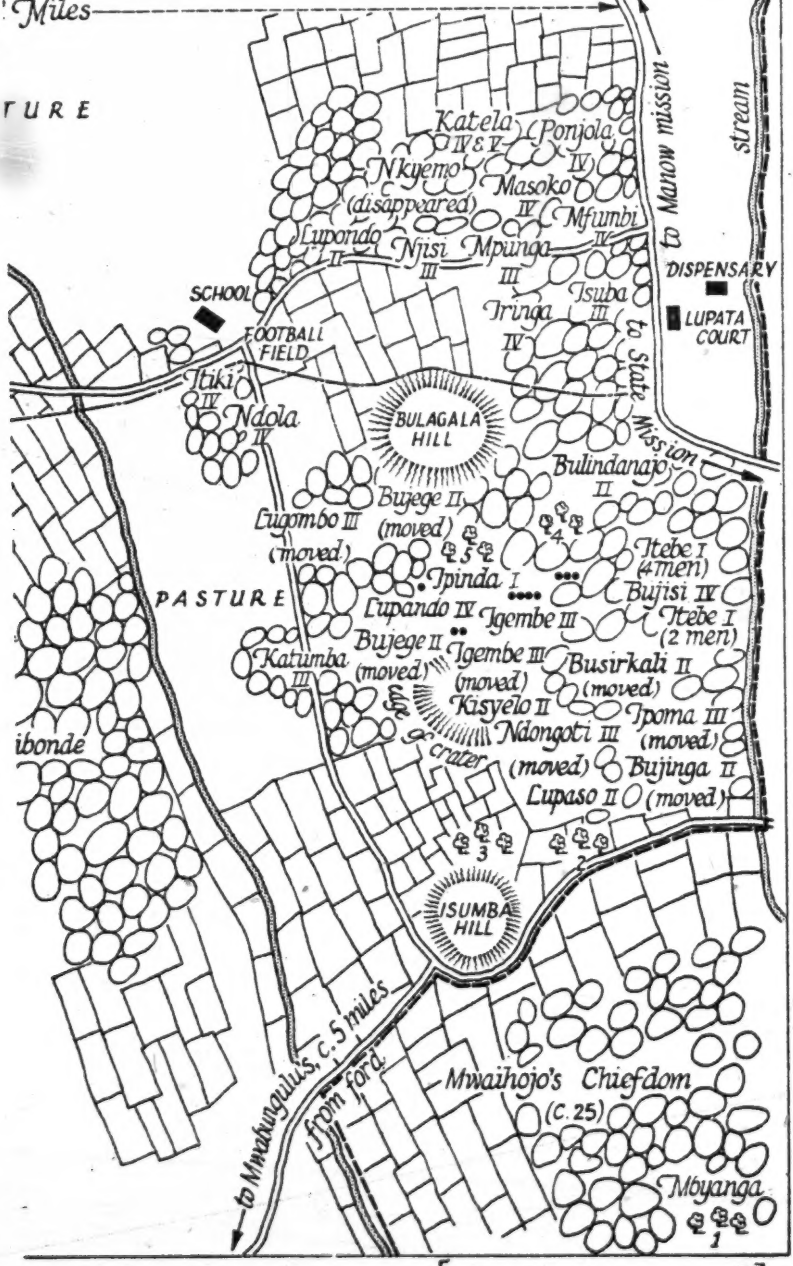

POPO'S CHIEFDOM (C 24) IN 1955 [facing p. 100; section B]

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NOTE

It should be realized that (i) the names of the two senior villages of a generation are well known and clear cut, but those of subordinate villages are more fluid. Furthermore a village often has subdivisions, distinguished by its members by name, but known to outsiders only by the general village name. (ii) A village may acquire a new name at the 'coming out'; the senior village of Mwanyilu's generation used to be called 'Mpuguso' but 'came out' as 'Lupando'. (iii) Some villages die out altogether, e.g. Kyemo II. (iv) Some villages straddle generations. Katela in 1955 is in the same sort of position as Katumba in 1935. It includes eight sons of Mpunga who belong to generation III, but also fourteen sons of men of Masoko who 'came out' with Mwanyilu. In the case of Katumba the members who were sons of men of generation III moved to younger villages and 'came out' with Mwanyilu, among them being his senior headman Kilasile, a man of over forty. But Kilasile's contemporaries who were sons of men of generation II could not 'come out' with Mwanyilu, at least not as a group—and the members of Katumba attended the 'coming out' as 'fathers'. Boys join a village of contemporaries but may move later to a village of younger men who are of their own structural generation.

At the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu and Mwabungulu five village headmen were 'caught' and secluded with their chiefs. They represented five clear-cut villages. Kilasile and Sikambombo, Mwanyilu's two senior headmen who made fire are leaders of Lupando and Iringa respectively; Pauliki and Batungulu their juniors are leaders of Bujisi (or Ipoma) and Mfumbi (or Isuba), and Mwanjotile the single headman of the junior heir, Mwabungulu, has his own village of Nkuyu established on newly settled land in the forest. The young men of Kibonde were included under Kilasile's authority, and those of Kituli and Kabula under Sikambombo's. The names Lupando and Iringa are well known as those of sections of Mwanyilu's chiefdom, but the names Bujisi and Mfumbi are not: the young men of these villages still use the names of their fathers' villages, Ipoma and Isuba, though there is a clear territorial separation between fathers and sons. Taxes are collected under the names of Igembe, Ipoma, Kibonde, Njisi, Isuba, Kituli, and the three forest villages, Kilosi, Kiloba, and Nkuyu.

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like most of the leaders of Zionist Churches in the south.[1] It is noticeable that the two 'independent' Churches have a more elaborate form of service than the Church from which their leaders have sprung, and Ngemela habitually wears conspicuous vestments. There is, of course, great variation between different denominations in the emphasis placed on ritual, some Protestants abjuring it and turning their very insistence on starkness and simplicity into a ritual in itself—a taboo. There seems to be a clear tendency in Southern Africa for 'independent' Churches to express themselves more and more in ritual and less in dogma. In this way they reduce the gap between themselves and the pagans, for the pagan religion is expressed almostly exclusively in ritual, whereas Christianity is expressed in creeds and confessions as well as in the rituals of the Church.

(e) THE CONTRAST BETWEEN PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

There are certain common elements in the rituals celebrated by pagans and Christians: some of the occasions are the same, and in the conceptions of sacrifice, of death and rebirth, of confession and cleansing, there are similarities; but there are also profound differences. The conception of life, immortality, replaces the preoccupation with fertility, for though most Nyakyusa Christians, like the pagans, regard celibacy as evidence of physical abnormality, and the conventional desire of a woman is to have six children—a quiverful in Nyakyusa eyes—yet fertility is no longer the end of all being, sought in every ritual. There are profound differences, too, in the values expressed in the rituals regarding sex relations, the range of moral obligations, and social change. In pagan thought polygyny is good—a man should have many children. Child marriage is defended on the ground that a girl 'gets accustomed to her husband' if she goes to him early, and homosexual relations between youths and young men are tolerated since they have no wives and *cannot* marry if the older men are polygynists. What is upheld is the chastity of women, and a total separation of the sex activities of members of successive generations, expressed in the taboos limiting familiarity between mother and son, father and nubile daughter, father-in-law and daughter-law. In Christian thought it is the 'pure in heart' who 'see God' and this is interpreted by the mission Churches to imply monogamy. Only in the 'independent' African Churches is it asserted

[1] The emphasis on healing, so common in the south, is absent.

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Councils, the importance of establishing machinery for their appointment in chiefdoms where the 'coming out' is no longer held is obvious.

The traditional communal rituals have not been dropped altogether, but their celebration is sporadic and not everyone supports them. Careful enquiries suggest that in less than half of the chiefdoms has the 'coming out' been celebrated when it was due. In the most conservative portion of the district, Selya, there were celebrations in 1952 and 1954, but even in that area a number of the ruling chiefs have never 'come out'. The omission is due partly to the desire of the old men to retain office, partly to the increase in population and the planting of coffee which makes any new deal in land unacceptable, and partly to the feeling of many that the old ritual is an anachronism, if not directly incompatible with their new faith in Christianity. Some chiefs who have not 'come out' would welcome a celebration; one such told us that 'if the "coming out" died chieftainship would die'; but a young chief's personal wishes are not decisive in this matter. Sacrifices at the groves of chiefs and heroes are not as frequent as before, but they still occur at some groves in time of drought or other emergency. The Kinga came to Lubaga in 1954, and they were expected to come and instal Kasitile's heir in 1955. In 1954 also there were sacrifices to Mwaijonga (82) and Mwakisambwe (30) for it was a season of scarcity. Rituals for cleansing the country and sprinkling the homesteads occur sporadically 'when occasion demands', but not annually in any chiefdom and never in some. And when celebrations do occur they do not unite the people of a chiefdom as they used to do. Christians oppose them and many non-Christians are also sceptical.

In 1935 the traditional rituals celebrated by lineages and chiefdoms formed a coherent system. They were directed towards the shades and the heroes, as was manifest in the sacrifices and in the dramas of death and rebirth when those secluded 'dwelt with the shades' or were 'caught hold of' by Kyala.[1] The older participants were then conscious, in greater or lesser degree, of the symbolism implicit in the actions they performed. By 1955 the ritual cycle was nowhere celebrated in full: what remained were 'bits and pieces' of ritual, none of them fully intelligible without reference to the complete cycle. The link between the rites and the shades and the heroes was less clear, and the symbolism less

[1] *Vide supra*, pp. 27-48, 70-85; *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 51, 98, 101, 111-13, 203.

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and is therefore to be interpreted as 'confession of anger', rather than as 'rebellion'.

Sometimes there is an expression of *opposite* tendencies, both implicitly approved. The sacrifices to the heroes and at the groves of the chiefs emphasize seniority and precedence, and express the dependence of junior on senior kinsmen, but the myth, recalled in every celebration, tells of the surpassing power of the son or younger brother in the beginning of time, and the junior brother of a chief often holds office as a priest. Then there is the drama of driving away the shade and bringing him back transformed, which is so characteristic of the rituals of kinship and appears again at the cleansing of the country. Such contradictions are doubtless expressions of ambivalent attitudes among the participants themselves, and of the attempt in ritual to reconcile conflicting social principles—in these instances authority with the rights and duties of juniors, and change with continuity.

In a society without written records legal certainty depends very largely on publicity. This is apparent in the law relating to marriage contracts and family inheritance,[1] and still more so in the law of the chiefdom. The ritual of 'coming out' celebrates radical changes in social status, and the public recognition of the leaders, members, and territorial boundaries of villages, as well as of the heirs to chieftainship. Thus certainty in these matters is assured. There is no positive value of the co-regency of father and son (as in ancient Egypt),[2] but the installation of the young chiefs before the death of their father serves to mitigate conflicts over the succession. Confusion over village boundaries and village leadership often appears when the ritual has not been celebrated, for there is no public definition to refer to.

How close is the link between religious belief and practice and social structure? There is no doubt that the sacrifices to the dead chiefs and heroes and the traditional rituals of kinship supported the former political and kinship structure of the Nyakyusa. Their performance compelled co-operation between kinsmen,[3] between neighbouring chiefs, and between chiefs and people. How far then does the change in religion, begun when the first Christian convert professed his new faith, compel a change in the social

[1] Godfrey Wilson, 'An Introduction to Nyakyusa Law', *Africa*, vol. ix, 1937, p. 29.
[2] H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp. 101-2.
[3] cf. *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 190-200, 227.

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In the Northern Highlands there is now a strong tendency for the tight village system to disintegrate as men seek to site their houses, each in his own coffee plot. In the Lake Plains also the structure of the age-village is changing – there the villages persist as such but they come to be inhabited by men of any age and new villages do not emerge with a new chief. No attempt is made here, however, to analyse these variations for they are only now beginning and no satisfactory, detailed information is available for the post-war cash economy of the highland areas.

The Government of Tanganyika has permitted the publication of this essay, and I wish to express my gratitude for its support. The essay is a modified version of my original Report which was presented to Government in January, 1956. The views expressed in it are my own and not those of Government. As usual in my work as Government Sociologist, I have received much valuable assistance, advice and information from officers stationed in the area. The Nyakyusa themselves, as during my first enquiry, were usually cooperative, and at least some of them welcomed my work as a contribution to the easement of their novel difficulties. It would not have been surprising had they remained obdurate and antagonistic towards my enquiries about their land, for like many modern Africans they have a sense of insecurity which is not susceptible to reason. In fact I was able without much difficulty to make any enquiry I wished, to measure sample areas and to discuss the situation in all its aspects. Perhaps it is that an African people welcome a sympathetic enquirer and in their problems genuinely want assistance. The task of a sociologist is of course in some ways rather easier than that of an administrator or technical officer who has to persuade the people actually to accept and practice new ways and to abandon old ways. It is hoped that this essay may be of assistance both to these officers and to the people whom they are attempting to assist and teach.

Finally, I must thank the East African Institute of Social Research which has accepted this essay for publication, and especially Dr. L. A. Fallers who kindly read and criticised the original draft and who drew the two sketch maps.

Note: The term, the "Lake Plains", as used in this essay is to be understood to cover the major part of the modern local government area under the Ntebela Rural Council. Omitted are the small groups of Kisi (Ikombe) and Ndali (Ngana) peoples to the extreme east and west respectively. This area contains the alluvial flood plains surrounding the northern tip of Lake Nyasa, and the lowest foothills to the north where the country begins its steep incline towards the Poroto Mountains. To the south lies the lake and to the south-west, beyond the meandering Songwe river, lie the bushlands of the northern part of the Nyasaland Protectorate. To the east are the towering Livingstone Mountains and to the north live the other Nyakyusa groups in the highlands.

The area comprises a fairly compact social and economic region with a common historical tradition. Several of the indigenous chiefdoms stretch across the intermediate boundary between flood plains and foothills. With but one exception the present chiefs are lineal descendants, in their various houses, of the original Mwakyusa who led the people into this lowland area five generations ago. The modern inhabitants are pre-eminently the Nyakyusa-proper.

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CHAPTER II

THE TRADITIONAL SYSTEM

Although this essay is to be primarily concerned with the modern and changing land and population situation among the Nyakyusa of the Lake Plains, it is quite essential first to have an understanding of the traditional system of political and territorial organisation and of land tenure. This is not mere historicism, for despite changes the traditional system remains as the basis of contemporary land-holding and land law. Whilst actual conditions on the ground change, the Nyakyusa appreciation of those changes and their attitudes to land lag significantly behind. In brief, the traditional system was geared to a situation where there was plenty of land. Today the people find real difficulty in adjusting themselves to a high density of population and an acute shortage of land, with the result that this new situation is aggravated by outmoded practices, attitudes and cultural values.

The ancestors of the present group of peoples now known collectively as the Nyakyusa, moved into the Rungwe region from the Ukinga Highlands to the east beyond the peaks of the Livingstone Mountains. According to legend, which is probably substantially true, these newcomers found a sparsely populated country which they easily occupied. Later, following internecine strife, one group under a man called Mwakyusa left the Masoko area in the centre of present-day Rungwe District and moved down into the Lake Plains. There, probably less than 150 years ago, they drove out the Ngonde people and settled. The sons of Mwakyusa took their shares of the country and people and established their independent chiefdoms. The chiefs in 1956 are the lineal descendants, mainly in the fifth generation, of Mwakyusa, and have a well-known genealogy. The only exception to this occurs amongst the group of tiny chiefdoms in the extreme east under the Livingstones, which now form a single administrative chiefdom under Mwakilasa and number some 400 men. They trace descent from pre-Nyakyusa settlers known as the Saku.

Traditionally, as today, the village was the basic unit both in social life generally and in land-holding in particular. The Nyakyusa village was possibly unique in Africa. It was comprised of men of roughly the same age, together with their wives and young children, and it excluded their fathers and sons and also, very often, their elder and younger brothers. Each village consisted of a close group of houses (often centred on a broad "village street"), with arable and pastoral land around it. Each village had fairly well-defined boundaries with its neighbours. The village was represented as a group and acted corporately through its headman, *lifumu*, who was the guardian of villagers' land rights, the arbiter in land problems and disputes, and the controller of unused land. He was also the political and ritual leader of the village, but nevertheless he was a commoner chosen from amongst the villagers themselves, and was not a member of a chiefly lineage.

Land was owned by the village as a group. Every man resident in the village had a clear right to a site for his house and banana plot and to arable land within the village boundaries; he also had a right to graze his cattle in its communal pastures. Residence gave these rights and members of other villages were excluded. A man who left the village automatically gave up these rights, though if he returned he was able to take up his former holding or its equivalent.

villages grew ever smaller and became extinct as their members gradually died off in old age.

A Nyakyusa village, then, owed its being to this most significant political, social and religious event. Each village had its area approximately demarcated, and each headman was ritually and magically strengthened in order to lead and protect his men and their families.

This particular system operated satisfactorily in the demographic and land-using conditions of the old days. By the process of bifurcation, briefly described above, new chiefdoms and new villages were formed for each generation. Although the population appears to have been increasing rapidly there was always sufficient land to create two chiefdoms where one had existed before, and to create new villages and more villages than had existed before in the old chiefdom. The two new chiefs were able easily to move apart and find sufficient and more than sufficient land for their needs.

The system of bifurcation, the ideal of the Nyakyusa, did not always work out so neatly in practice – at any rate it often did not in the Lake Plains. Sometimes it did work; for example, the present chiefdoms of Lazarus and Koroso are the two parts of their grandfather's single chiefdom, which split up under their respective fathers. Similarly, the present Mwakipesile and Mwamasangula chiefdoms stemmed from a single unit, whilst the Mwakipesile chiefdom itself today is really two indigenous chiefdoms, but the Government would recognise only the senior brother's claim to chiefship and allowed him authority over the whole. Even where a single new chiefdom succeeded the old (frequently as the result of civil war in which one brother subjugated the other) the essential dichotomous arrangement persisted so that the resultant single unit had two distinct halves, each with its own head with his villages and headmen. In any case, whether traditional bifurcation occurred or not, and right down to modern times, new villages have been established at the time of the "coming-out" of the new chief. The basic village system showed greater persistence and remained truer to type than did the chiefdom and the wider political system.

The real authority of a Nyakyusa chief was not in general very great, although individuals here and there achieved personal importance. A chief was accorded a great deal of prestige and honour, and by tribute and gifts he frequently became pre-eminently wealthy. He was supposed to be kept informed by his headmen of all important village affairs and to approve all matters concerning the land; but the village headman was in fact the real land authority, who attended to the details of land allocation and land use within his village. A chief could not do this, and in fact only in so far as he had the support and loyalty of his headmen had he any authority at all. "A chief is a chief because he has headmen," one informant put it to me – he was a prominent chief himself. A villager said: "A chief does not own the chiefdom, or the land. We, the people together, own it." A chief could, without notice or advice, take any unoccupied land for the use of himself or of his kinsmen, but he could not allocate it to others; both headman and villagers would have indignantly and successfully protested had he tried, as some occasionally did. Land disputes, an uncommon feature in a country where land was plentiful, were settled by the headman of the village in question; they were the private affairs of the village and the chief had no right of interference. Inter-village disputes first came before a meeting of the headmen concerned, with perhaps the assistance of the senior headman of the chiefdom. Only if a dispute could not be settled and if it seemed likely to threaten general peace within the chiefdom would the disputants go before the chief himself, who even so relied and had to rely heavily on his headmen to secure a settlement. So delicate was his position that he might be unable to resolve inter-village disputes for fear of witchcraft reprisals against him by the unsuccessful party.

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land automatically reverted to the common pool. An established villager might decide to use part of it perhaps, but not before prudently gaining the approval of the headman, lest the migrant return later and accuse him of unlawful and unfriendly seizure. If the headman agreed, as he would after a time in most cases, the newly acquired plot became part of that villager's holding with as secure a title as the rest. Such vacated land could also be allocated by the headman to a newcomer or, before the sons' village was established, to the son of a villager.

If a man had more land than he could cultivate – because, for example, his sons had left him to cultivate in their own villages, or his wife had died – he was under no essential obligation to give up any part. The headman might, if the need arose, try to persuade him to release a portion in order to make it available to someone in need; but the land-holder could refuse and the headman had to accept his refusal. As a chief depended on the support of his headmen, so did a headman's position ultimately depend upon at least the passive support of his villagers, from whose ranks he was chosen.

At the next "coming-out" ceremony the men of a village of the old chiefdom might be required to move aside in order to allow the young men, their sons, to take up the better building sites and farming land. This they traditionally did voluntarily and they built new homesteads on one side and cleared new arable plots. Once re-established in this manner, these older men would not be disturbed again and they remained secure in their new holdings. How often in fact such a displacement took place I cannot say, but it certainly seems to have occurred sometimes, for one can still trace old village sites which appear to bear out the common Nyakyusa story.

In all this it must be remembered that the spirit of village unity and coevality was held in far higher esteem than land in such a fertile country where land was plentiful and subsistence farming required but small-sized holdings. Security of tenure and defined rights to particular plots are notions belonging to a different situation and age; when land begins to be scarce and to have an economic value, and when there is danger of men not being able to obtain as much as they need roughly where they need it.

Newcomers were invariably welcomed to a village: they were supplied with a house site and an arable holding and were assisted with food until the first harvest. They were an addition to the numerical size and physical strength of the village, and they increased a headman's prestige. Their rights were no less assured than those of founder-members of the village, although their social position was less secure, at least at first, for they had not shared in the history of the community and had not grown up with the ties of village association and comradeship amounting almost to kinship.

Traditional rights in trees may be mentioned briefly. Trees were inherited without difficulty along with the land on which they stood, and a brother or son would commonly inherit the deceased's valuable trees without bothering to take the arable land around. If a man left his village and thus forfeited his land there, the position was different. Banana trees went with the land and a new occupant simply took them over; bananas are of no great value as they grow so readily and ubiquitously. Bamboos are more valuable (being used extensively in house-building) and any left behind in this way could be claimed in the first instance not by the village but by the chief. If the chief wanted them they became his property, or he could grant them to any man he favoured. Usually a chief was content to leave them: then the local kinsmen of the departed man had first claim, and if they had no use for them, or if no kinsmen were resident in the village, they became village property to be allocated by the headman. *Usyunguti* trees[1] were regarded in

1. These are valued oil-bearing trees planted by the Nyakyusa of the Lake Plains, the botanical name of which I do not know.

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413
[554]
[609]
[621]

news of such reserved land elsewhere. Such land is cultivated in the meantime on a kind of year-to-year lease by one or more of the villagers as allowed by the headman.

Even when no vacant plots exist a headman will still accept newcomers. If they are young men they must be prepared to go landless for the time being (i.e., to remain dependent on their father's fields elsewhere) until such time as land becomes vacant. If the newcomer is an older man, then the headman will try to persuade one or more of his villagers to give up portions of their holdings and he will often cede part of his own land. The newcomer is therefore often allocated small strips and plots here and there in the village arable area and he thereafter joins the land-hungry crowd seeking to expand their holdings. In one village in which I worked where land shortage was critical (Kapugi, Koroso's chiefdom), there was not a single patch of usable land unworked; yet here the headman had, with full village approval, accepted three newcomers during the first nine months of 1955. Two of them were young men, one unmarried, and they could not expect to obtain land for some time except for a small banana plot. The third newcomer was a middle-aged man from a village some 12 miles away in another chiefdom. The headman had given him a half-acre plot out of his own paddy field and was laboriously begging pieces of land here and there from his people in order to make up a new holding of perhaps an acre. The headman himself had only about three and a half acres of arable land; he had at least one adult son who had not yet acquired an arable plot and he had other sons and brothers' sons owning only small fields. Yet he favoured this stranger, this newcomer. He was quite firm in his resolution to accept other newcomers in the future and in this he believed that he was acting as a good headman should. As far as I could learn he was supported by his villagers.

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This is not, by any means, an isolated or even unusual phenomenon. It is, I feel, important to bear in mind this illustration of contemporary affairs. Firstly, because it shows another way in which holdings are fragmented and dispersed; and secondly, because it demonstrates how, so far, the Nyakyusa have refused to face the situation of land shortage, and how they continue to follow traditional practices and values associated with village prestige. These people complain of their inability to obtain sufficient arable land, but they are not yet prepared to make the mental and social adjustments which might at least partly relieve their new predicament. On the other hand, they themselves understand the need for movement and perhaps they are right in their implied insistence not to discard their cultural ideals. Their insistence on accepting newcomers and their willingness (however dimly perceived and expressed) to share their land with the landless are not discreditable attitudes, even if they are economically untenable.

Security of Tenure and Disputes over Land

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As already noted, under traditional land tenure a Nyakyusa had good security in his holding so long as he continued to live in the same village. The only alteration of tenure occurred at the "coming-out" ceremony of a new chief when the older men would, if required, move aside in order to give their sons' generation the best land. This did not invariably happen in any case. Fundamentally, however, security of tenure is not a matter of great importance to a people who have plenty of land, and land which is more or less of the same quality. Indeed, convenience of location in respect of one's own homestead was almost the only value land had as such. Occasionally a more dominant chief might try to seize a commoner's field to allow of his own expanded cultivation; it was most unusual for him to succeed, and even if he did the dispossessed villager suffered little real deprivation, for he could easily obtain another field fairly near at hand.

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TABLE V

DISTRICTS IN TANGANYIKA WHERE LAND DISPUTES ARE COMMON

1953	No. of land cases	% of total civil cases	Estimated population density	Population per land case
Bukoba District	1,189	23	69	223
Lushoto Division	149	12	188	742
Moshi District	347	25	277	746
Ngara District	81	29	125	1,393

The Changing Village

The possibly unique age-village of the Nyakyusa is now undergoing considerable and fairly rapid change in response to the new conditions of land shortage. There is, firstly, an increasing sense of village exclusiveness and, secondly, there has been a breakdown in the essential age-basis of its organisation. That is to say, that whilst the corporate unity of the village as an independent group has been strengthened, yet the social foundation of the village has simultaneously been changed and a different sort of village is emerging. It would take us far beyond the scope of this present essay if a full analysis of the changing village were to be made, nevertheless in so far as these changes are more or less directly the consequences of modern land shortage, land tenure and economic conditions some account is essential. Since the age-village was fundamental in the life and social organisation of these people, the new emerging village is of crucial importance.

Land shortage has definitely exaggerated the unity and exclusiveness of the village in the Lake Plains at a time when, for other reasons, it was beginning to become a more open group. There was always, as we have seen, insistence on the principle that only a member of the village could hold and use village land; but village boundaries were often poorly marked and it was difficult to determine which headman, if any, had genuine jurisdiction over land relatively distant from the established village sites. Nor was it particularly important to be able to do so whilst land was plentiful. As paddy cultivation spread, men began seeking extra fields farther and farther away from home as land nearby was all taken up; and so long as they did not attempt to take land in the immediate vicinity of another village site there was seldom much difficulty in this. The attitudes born of a sufficiency of land persisted and headmen were not disposed to protest against outsiders who sought fields near the limits of their vaguely defined areas. Internecine warfare and raiding had, of course, been abolished as an expression of and a weapon in inter-village rivalries and animosities. With the establishment of general peace and security, and with increasing movement about the country between villages and chiefdoms, such rivalries and animosities began to die away. Many men came to live in the villages which they themselves had not helped to found; their coevals from their fathers' villages lived elsewhere, many of them widely scattered, and it was not possible to maintain a high degree of village patriotism, and, people began to feel, it was not especially necessary or important any longer.

It began to be possible for a man to hold some of his arable land within the area of another village, so long as members of the second village were not deprived of the opportunity of their own agricultural expansion should they desire it. This was especially the case when a large area of hitherto vacant (i.e. bush) but now valuable paddy land was contained within the approximate boundaries of a village. Outsiders were allowed to acquire fields on the strength of kinship with the headman or with one of the established villagers, or even by giving some small present to the headman (e.g. a little beer or some meat, etc.). Land was still plentiful then, or so it seemed to the Nyakyusa, and future shortages and difficulties were not perceived.

there remained scattered pieces here and there which could be taken up, and some existing holdings in the area are too large for the agricultural capabilities of their occupiers. The temporary safety valve was shut off. The local headman had become seriously worried over the large-scale alienation of his land resources without any equivalent increase in the number of his villagers, and he also wished to conserve the remaining land against the now better understood needs of his own people.

The principle of no land without residence also means that a villager who wishes to move must automatically forfeit his land-holding in the village. A little earlier he would most probably have been able to retain at least his fields beyond the immediate vicinity of the houses – in so far as his new residence was not too far away to allow continued cultivation. This has been especially important for younger men who, wishing to take up a vacant holding elsewhere, also desire to retain their share of the paternal holding obtained by inheritance. Conversely, they are now unable to move on to their father's holding and yet retain their fields in their own village. Such men must now make a permanent decision between the utility of, perhaps, two inadequate holdings which, however, combined together might be of satisfactory size.

As a consequence of this, inter-village opposition is probably greater than it has ever been in European times, and no less strong perhaps than it was in the old days. Men feel that the security of their holdings, the future of their sons, and the possibility of increasing their arable cultivation lies wholly within the security and stability of their own village. They tend to see other villages and other villagers as a potential threat to their own land requirements; they often suspect the worst of neighbouring villages who, they think, will, given the chance, seize some of their land. Headmen and villagers would refuse to cross the boundary into another village when they accompanied me during my investigations, lest they be accused of contemplating appropriation of the land there. Such aliens who still retained land in a village were regarded with some animosity. Nyakyusa would not look beyond their own village boundaries in an attempt to make an appreciation of the modern overall land situation. They wished only tenaciously to cling to what they already had and to guard it jealously; they were only too inclined to believe that other villages nearby were better off and to use them as scapegoats for their own difficulties and shortage. It must be said that this renewed insistence on village exclusiveness and the inviolability of village boundaries has in fact tended to make for a certain inequality of land-holding according to the perceptiveness and celerity with which headmen claimed authority over formerly vacant lands. This condition is, however, overexaggerated in men's claims today, and in any case it is tending to disappear under the pressure of inter-village movement.

The Nyakyusa village in the Lake Plains, with its intensified independence and aggressive exclusiveness, and jealous of its believed permanent boundaries, has not at the same time been able to retain its traditional coeval basis. Whereas formerly the youths of a village moved to one side, there to build their own hamlet and eventually to acquire their own fields in association with its establishment as a full village in its own right, now this is no longer feasible or even possible, for the land is not available for this sort of expansion. The young men are driven back on a dependence on the fields already held by their fathers in the old village. They gradually move into their fathers' places and take over the paternal holdings; or, as we have seen, they seek where they may to obtain new allocations in any other village where they can gain admittance. The coeval basis of village living is lost.

The boys and youths still leave their fathers' houses and build their first, small huts together on a site somewhere adjacent to the main village site,

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as determined by the village headman. But even building sites with the essentially associated banana groves are becoming increasingly scarce and valuable, for no one desires to decrease the amount of arable by enlarging the built-up areas – rather the reverse. The number of young men's villages is therefore diminishing and congestion of their huts is increasing to the stage very often where no more than a narrow passage if left between adjacent houses. There comes to be a wider age range in the young men's hamlets where, often, a large village provides only one for all its sons. Smaller villages sometimes provide no accommodation at all for their sons, who are thus compelled to seek membership of a neighbouring group. These hamlets are mainly regarded nowadays as temporary residential areas for the young men until such time as they move on to an existing holding – their father's or some other. There is therefore no attempt to provide sufficient space for an adequate banana grove with each young man's house, let alone a food-crop plot behind it. The arable land beyond the congested huts already belongs to inhabitants of the main village. When a young man is able to leave and take up a holding, his vacated site (together, often, with the hut) is taken over by a waiting youth who has probably been sharing with another hitherto.

These young men's hamlets do not, any longer, eventually mature and become villages in their own right with their own headman and arable lands. Formerly, when this occurred, they would probably have taken over a good deal of the lands of the old village, as the young men exercised the privileges of their new maturity against their elders with the emergence of the new chiefdom. New chiefdoms, and with them new villages, no longer emerge, and this is mainly because Government has prohibited the bifurcation of petty chiefdoms on the death of the old chief, as it is considered inconsistent with the development of stable, modern local government. Additionally, however, the shortage of land can no longer allow of the traditional expanding politico-territorial organisation. The elder men's villages are not now prepared to yield ground to the young men, and the latter cannot expand elsewhere. Thus political requirements and land restriction work together to make the old system obsolete and to freeze the spatial distribution of villages as it existed in early European times. As far as I could ascertain in the chiefdoms of the Lake Plains, probably no new village had emerged in the past 20 or more years, except for a few cases of large ones splitting into two for administrative and social convenience. Many villages there date back to pre-European days often now under the son, or even the grandson, of the original headman (though this is not essential or invariable in any way).

The age-basis of the Nyakyusa village is thus disappearing; indeed, in many villages it has already disappeared in everything but the young men's hamlets. Where the process has gone least far, there is still apparent a rough division of the single village into the old men's sector (men at least 50 years of age, and many much older); the middle-aged men's sector (men between about 30 and 50 years old, being the younger brothers or elder sons of the old men); and the young men's and youths' sector. On inheritance, sons tend to show a continued reluctance to move and live on their father's house-site and to become immediate neighbours of older men; they avoid it if possible, often allowing a middle-aged man to shift there instead. Nevertheless even this sort of age-division is rapidly vanishing and in very many villages a man's neighbour may be of any age.

We have seen that inheritance is now one of the chief methods of obtaining land. Under the new inheritance rules, this means that sons follow their fathers and take up their fathers' arable holdings, building sites and banana groves. Some young men inherit early, others inherit late; there is no longer any notion or possibility of the younger generation entering into its

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land en bloc. Young men compete with one another, with their elder brothers and with their fathers for allocations of land left vacant. We also saw, however, that often in the larger families[1] not all the sons are able to get a share of the paternal holding, or at least not a share of practicable size. Thus younger sons are forced to resort to trying to obtain vacant land elsewhere – possibly within the same village, but as often as not outside. Finally, the young man on his new holding may find his neighbours to be of any age; certainly they will not have been members of his own original coeval hamlet.

The way for this changing concept of village life and the new sort of village was prepared in the years before land shortage became important. The changed political system has been briefly noted already, but no less important was the great increase in inter-village movement in earlier European days when peace and personal security had been established. During this period Wilson (1938, page 32) reckoned that perhaps 80 per cent. of Nyakyusa shifted at least once from the place where they first obtained fields. This estimate, whilst perhaps holding good for Highland Nyakyusa amongst whom Wilson mainly worked, was too high for the people of the Lake Plains, where about 40 per cent. is more correct according to my genealogical and village surveys. That is still a relatively high degree of mobility for a mainly subsistence, peasant society such as it was in those years. It is clear that the pseudo-fraternal bond of coevality could not persist as a main element of village life and consciousness, when in fact as many as half of the members of a village were not original coeval founders but had come in from elsewhere. Before the land shortage, movement did not entail the shifting of young men to other young men's villages, or of older men to other older men's villages. It was, at least eventually, promiscuous movement, ignoring age categories. The compulsions of land shortage seem, in retrospect, only to have followed existing lines of village development and to have begun the completion of the process.

In the Lake Plains, therefore, the village persists as a close, territorial, land-owning group and as a specific cluster of homesteads and huts, usually with a village street, the whole closely hemmed in by continuous banana groves. Beyond this lie the arable lands, usually food-crop fields nearby and paddy fields farther off. In jealously protecting what it already holds, the village has gained a new exclusiveness, for the security of the individual land-holder is maintained by the corporate ownership of the village and by excluding outsiders as far as possible. On the other hand, it is no longer an age-village either in fact or intention, and it cannot be, for age-villages were consistent only with an expanding territorial system and a subsistence economy.

This brief analysis of Nyakyusa village organisation in recent times applies only to the Lake Plains. In some parts of both the Central Region and the Northern Highlands the age-basis of Nyakyusa villages had most probably already been seriously weakened in pre-European times.[2] On the other hand, elsewhere, and particularly in the more conservative parts less affected by modern trends and the cash economy, the traditional age-village still exists in something like its old form.

Land shortage has appeared in the Highlands together with a developing cash economy, but the basis of agricultural and economic change lies mainly in coffee cultivation which, of course, requires relatively smaller fields than does paddy in the Lake Plains, but it needs more care and attention from the grower for moderate success. As far as I could see in the course of

1. Polygyny is still the norm amongst the older and many middle-aged men, and therefore a father often knows several sons to inherit.
2. According to elderly informants in Western Kukwe, Mwaisisi and some central chiefdoms, and also the evidence of old village sites.

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my earlier labour migration enquiries in the Highlands, the village as a close residential unit is breaking up as the people are increasingly adopting the more common East African pattern of each family building its own homestead in its own land-holding. These northern Nyakyusa say that they must have their coffee plots next to their homesteads for the sake of continuous supervision, and that this is impossible (which is true enough) where men live close together in compact villages. Again, coffee plots, with their standing, permanent trees, have become a valuable item of inheritance; sons lose no opportunity of taking them irrespective of the locations of their coevals or of the identity of their immediate neighbours. The values of land, cash-crops and material progress are placed much higher than the traditional values of coevality; indeed, such traditional values are largely inconsistent with modern wants and aspirations.

Thus the Nyakyusa age-village has become almost obsolete and it would seem that it must inevitably vanish altogether even in the remaining conservative areas (e.g., in the east). Furthermore, its disappearance is leading to a distinct divergence between the Lake Plains Nyakyusa and those of the Highlands. How far this divergence will become permanent and basically significant cannot be foreseen as yet in this early stage. Clearly the compact village is best fitted to an arable economy of rice cultivation in the Lake Plains, and at least until there is further agricultural change it will persist as a most important social group.

Nevertheless, with its enhanced exclusiveness and relative social isolation and with renewed rivalry with its neighbours, the Lake Plains village is scarcely conducive to the encouragement of agricultural and economic development. Neither is it anything but harmful towards contemporary efforts in the politico-administrative sphere to reduce parochialism and to foster a sense of unity and co-operation beyond the village and the petty traditional chiefdoms. Whilst supervisory control of the land through the headman is in general excellent, reasonable and readily understandable to the people, yet the excess of restrictiveness, the competitive scrambling for vacated holdings and the jealous fears are surely more than merely unfortunate. There needs to be some modification to loosen the over-tight strings of village corporate ownership, to regularise the transfer of vacated holdings and to lessen the fears of village against village. These points are taken up again in Chapter V.

Cattle and Pastural Requirements

Unfortunately, no great accuracy can be presumed for the Rungwe District cattle censuses, but the available figures are summarised in Table VI.

TABLE VI
NYAKYUSA CATTLE

	1935				1951	
	No. of cattle	*Acres per beast*	*Cattle per person*	*Cattle per family of 5*	*No. of cattle*	*Acres per beast*
Lake Plains	31,418	4.1	0.5	2.5	26,822	5.2
Central Region ..	19,380	7.1	0.4	2	19,160	7.2
N.E. Highlands ..	19,095	7.4	0.4	2	17,165	8.4
N.W. Highlands ..	22,974	8.0	0.4	2	16,835	10.9
Total: Nyakyusa.. ..	92,867	6.4	0.4	2	80,002	7.2

The indicated increase in the numbers of cattle may well be attributable only to improved census enumeration by the Veterinary Department.

Although 6.4 acres per head of cattle for all Nyakyusa country, and even 4.1 acres in the Lake Plains, might seem to be adequate in a country so

13:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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4. A visit to the chief's father's grave was paid in company with the chief and some of his *amafumu*. It was situated in a banana grove *(ilisyeto*[11]*)* not very remote from the chief's hut. The grave of the present chief's father was on the ground-floor, about one hundred paces from its edge and was characterised by a small sixedged basalt block about half a metre in height[12] and about forty centimetres in breadth. An indole-plant was also standing on the grave about one metre from the basalt block.

On this occasion the chief also told me of the special cases for which sacrifices are offered in this grove. These are performed only in cases of very serious accidents, sickness or famine which may overcome the chieftainship. In such cases a black cow is slaughtered after sunset at the edge of the grove. In the presence of the chief some pieces of meat of the slaughtered beast, together with some bananas, are laid down at the grave. The chief adds a prayer to his ancestors at some distance from the grave, referring to the evil by which the chieftainship or some special village of it has been afflicted. He enumerates all the names of his ancestors and asks them for their help.

The remaining pieces of the meat and other bananas are left in the grove during the night. When the next day dawns, the *amafumu* return and some *abanyago* divide the meat and eat it together. On this occasion the chief orders the removal of all remains of ashes from the huts. The ashes are thrown down in such unclean places as where leprous persons had been buried. After this has been done, the chief in conjunction with an *unanyago*[13] produces a new fire for the huts by twirling, and all other fires of the village, or villages, must be kindled anew from this "need-fire".

5. The reason for visiting an *undagusi* (diviner)[14] who dwelled in Ibungu an older age-set village[15] which seemed to the visitor to be a more ancient part of Katumba, was caused by the sickness of the chief's sister. In accordance with the custom of the Nyakyusa in bringing women back to their father's village if they are very sick, the

[11] Cf. Johnston, *ilisieta*, pl. *amasieta*, p. 450; *Mackenzie*, *ilisyeto*, burial place, p. 388; *masyeto*, graves of the dead chiefs, p. 121; Wilson, Introduction, p. 387, *silisyeto*, sacred grove; *Merensky*, p. 115.

[12] Cf. *Fülleborn*, p. 327.

[13] Cf. n. 5, p. 5.

[14] Cf. *Johnston*, p. 431.

[15] I proposed to call the special form of villages found within the Nyakyusa society, which are erected on the age-set principle, „age-set villages" (African Studies, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 15—16 June 1943), a terminology that does not alter G. Wilsons statements on the "Age Villages" (Introduction, p. 389 ff).